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CHRISTIAN COURIER

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Has any people heard the voice of God speaking ... p.10

61st year of publication

Small bomb makes big shock waves

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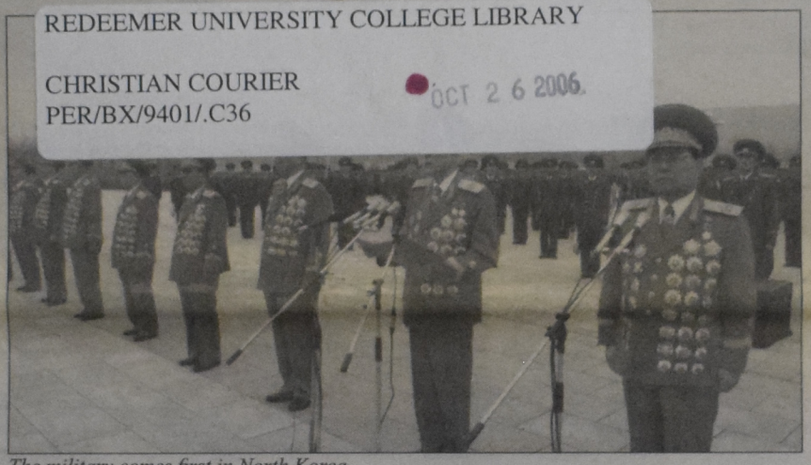


The military comes first in North Korea

The nuclear test conducted by North Korea over the protests and warnings of virtually the entire international community may not have produced a huge bang as far as nuclear tests go; it did, however, create shock waves around the world. Some have declared North Korea's action to be the death-knell for the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. Others have expressed anxieties about its impact on the "balance of power" in Asia, fearing that South Korea and Japan will be motivated to match this show of power. Even more frightening than seeing this weapon in the hands of an unpredictable dictator, especially to the U.S., is the prospect, perhaps even the likelihood, that North Korea will sell its nuclear weapons to Iran, Syria or to some terrorist group.

Even Russia and China, usually reluctant to exert pressure on North Korea, joined the other nations involved in Six-Nation talks with North Korea – Japan, South Korea and the U.S. in denouncing the action as irresponsible. The U.N., which had issued a strongly worded warning even before the attack, met in emergency session and issued a statement condemning the test. But words are one thing and actions another. While the U.S. and Japan pushed for strong sanctions, including inspection of materials entering the country, Russia and China held out for sanctions less liable to provoke North Korea into even more extreme reactions.

All the parties involved are aware that the people of North Korea already have a hard time getting enough to eat. In the mid-90s the country came to near collapse as over 2 million people died of starvation. No one wants a repeat of that. China and South Korea have an even greater interest in avoiding a complete collapse of the regime, for they would be inundated by a flood of refugees that neither would be able to handle. Japan and the U.S., on the other hand, are more worried about the threat North Korea as a nuclear power would pose to peace.

North Korea has reacted angrily and with threats to Japan's move to severely cut trade, even suggesting that Japan's action was tantamount to war. After talking tough, China sought to add some positive incentives as well as sanctions to the deal being worked out by the U.N. The U.S. clearly is fed up with providing such incentives, as North Korea keeps breaking earlier agreements and then seeking more concessions and more aid in return for returning to non-nuclear status. More and more it is beginning to look like a form of international blackmail. Unable to provide the wherewithal to support its own people, the dictatorial regime has developed a strategy to get other countries to feed its people and to prop up a loathsome government interested only in maintaining power.

A significant segment of journalists have been reporting the aggressive action of North Korea as a direct – and understandable – response to Bush's axis of evil speech and to the failure of U.S. diplomacy. From this perspective, Kim Jong Il's determination to turn his country into a nuclear power is nothing more than a natural reaction to the threat of regime change. A nuclear North Korea, like a nuclear Iran, is simply another creation of Bush's foreign policy.

Even the Oct. 12 headline in the *National Post* – "China, Russia, South Korea reject using the threat of force" – seems somewhat deceptive in this respect. Although there are a few hawks around calling for some form of military action or the threat of such against the North Korean regime, anything that would provoke a war in the Korean Peninsula is really unthinkable. And despite its rhetoric declaring a nuclear Korea "intolerable," the Bush administration has not suggested military action.

While the regime of Kim Jong Il may be paranoid enough to think it needs nuclear weapons to protect itself from regime change, no one else seems to think so. North Korea already has enough artillery and missiles aimed at Seoul and other South Korean cities (and perhaps a few Japanese as well) to obliterate a huge segment of the population and set the country back 30 years. Seoul is only 40 km from the border and is home to almost half the population of South Korea. With an army of some 1.2 million, the fourth largest in the world, according to some military analysts, North Korea is more than a match for the much smaller South Korean army, even though it is reinforced with some 32,000 U.S. troops. Although in the long run, North Korea could not win such a war, according to Robert Kaplan in the latest *Atlantic*, the loss of life would be horrific, far greater than anything we've seen in Iraq.

So it isn't just China, Russia and South Korea who wish to avoid a military clash with North Korea. Japan and the U.S., however, fear that a nuclear North Korea will only become bolder and the chances of war greater. However, both Condoleeza Rice and John Bolton have stressed that the U.S. is not pushing for a military confrontation with North Korea. It only wants the regime to honor its earlier commitments.

The story of North Korea's nuclear ambitions do not begin with George Bush or even with Clinton. North Korea tossed out inspectors in 2002 and quit the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty in 2003, but it has been working toward a nuclear capability for over 40 years, beginning in the 60s with the help of Russia. In the 70s, along with the USSR, it signed an inspection agreement designed to limit its nuclear technology to peaceful purposes, and in 1985 it signed the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty.

However, it dragged its heels in implementing the conditions of the treaty, demanding that the U.S. withdraw all its nuclear weapons from South Korea first. Bush Sr. did so in 1991 and in 1992 the two Koreas and the U.S. signed an agreement on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The following year, however, inspectors discovered that North Korea was not living up to the agreement. After another crisis and more negotiation, former President Carter brokered a new deal in 1994, one that promised extensive food and energy aid from the U.S. if North Korea returned to its earlier commitment.

In 2002, however, North Korea once again admitted it had been violating that agreement – for years, and it subsequently withdrew from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty. This time the U.S. refused to engage in direct talks, opting instead for the Six-Party Talks, in which South Korea, China, Russia, Japan and the U.S. were all prepared to offer North Korea concessions, aid and a guarantee of security if it would agree to abandon its nuclear program.

While the U.S. has stubbornly refused to yield to North Korea's insistence that it agree to one-to-one talks, South Korea and China have sought to influence its behavior by resorting to the carrot rather than the stick. China provides the bulk of the country's fuel and has at times provided some 40 percent of the food needed to feed a

See **North Korea** *on page 3 ...*

News

UN to decide soon on independence of Kosovo

Howard LaFranchi

WASHINGTON – With unsettling nuclear developments in North Korea, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and political upheaval in the Middle East, little attention is being paid to the Balkans, which might seem like a preoccupation of the post-cold-war 1990s.

But Kosovo – a Serbian province of 2 million people that spawned a NATO bombing campaign in 1999 – is on the brink of bursting onto the world stage once again. With the United States and the European Union pressing for resolution of Kosovo's final status this year, it once looked like independence was assured. But now Serbia is finagling to put that decision off – a move that could awaken Balkan unrest once again.

After seven years of United Nations control, the majority Albanian and Muslim population is clamoring for independence. But the Serbian (and largely Christian) minority is campaigning to remain attached to Serbia. The Serbian Kosovars claim that independence would mean creation of an Islamic fundamentalist state in Europe and expose them to ethnic violence.

Troops and economic investment as factors

Beyond those issues, other factors seem primed to raise Kosovo's status on the international agenda. The US would like to free up the 1,700 peacekeeping troops it still has in the province. Economic investment in a region that is an important trade and energy route is being held up by uncertainty over Kosovo's status.

And while some experts warn that failure to resolve Kosovo's status could turn it into a powder keg once again, still others caution against hasty action: They say Kosovo is being closely watched by other restless regions in eastern Europe and central Asia – including in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova – and could be used to fire up breakaway movements.

"It may seem hard to imagine that there was a day not so long ago when the Balkans were the biggest foreign-policy issue on the US plate, but the simple issue is still there," says Daniel Serwer, a Balkans expert at the US Institute of Peace (USIP) in Washington. "Part of the population wants to pull away and be independent, and another part wants things to stay the same. It's the repercussions that make things complex."

US officials have been saying since January that this would be the year of decision on Kosovo's final status. "The people of Kosovo deserve greater clarity, and as we approach the end of the year I suspect they will get greater clarity," said Daniel Fried, US assistant secretary for European and Eurasian affairs, on a stop last month in Pristina, Kosovo's capital.

The UN's special envoy to Kosovo, Martti Ahtisaari, is supposed to deliver a status-settlement recommendation next month. Anticipating the report will favor independence, Serbia is seeking to head it off by proposing a new constitution that specifies Kosovo as part of Serbia.

US and European Union officials say Serbia's actions are unlikely to derail the push to determine Kosovo's status – though they say the tactics (possibly including a referendum on the new constitution and elections) could delay a decision, which is ultimately to be made by the UN Security Council, until next year.

Kosovo church protected by barbed wire

While those maneuverings are going on, in Washington supporters and opponents of Kosovo's independence are redoubling efforts to win adherents.

Warnings from anti-independence groups

Anti-independence groups backed by Serbia have been running newspaper ads and sponsoring seminars in Washington to warn of a radical Islamist state and renewed ethnic cleansing if Kosovo is allowed to break from Serbia.

"Granting independence to Kosovo would be a reward for the crimes the Albanians have committed, and would create a base for criminality and jihad in the very heart of Europe," says Artemije Radosavljevic, a Serbian Orthodox bishop in Kosovo.

Bishop Artemije, who has made several trips to Washington to plead the Serbian population's case, claims that more than 3,000 Serbs of Kosovo have been killed or kidnapped in the years of international administration. He also says that 150 churches and monasteries have been razed and thousands of Serbian houses destroyed. He says he has found sympathetic ears in the US Congress, but little movement from a pro-independence stance in the State Department.

Mr. Serwer, who is also vice president of USIP's Center for Post-Conflict Peace and Stability Operations, says that while there have been some cases of violence against Serbs, the numbers have been "grossly trumped up" by the anti-independence lobby to make for a more alarming picture.

But Serwer reserves his ire for the references these groups make to Islamic terrorism "in an attempt to tap into American fears," he says.

"These claims, that go so far as to equate an independent Kosovo to an Al Qaeda refuge, are so outrageous and blatantly anti-Muslim that they are despicable," Serwer says.

Pro-Western orientation

Holding a similar assessment is Janusz Bugajski, director of the New European Democracies Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, and an independence advocate. "The population of Kosovo is one of the more pro-Western and pro-American populations in the world, " he says. "They had volunteers to fight [with the US] in Afghanistan and Iraq, so to say they are [Islamic] fundamentalists is to spread disinformation."

Beyond that, Mr. Bugajski cites reasons to settle Kosovo's status now. He worries the population could start to see the peacekeepers as occupiers, and he says uncertainty over the province's status is discouraging foreign investment. "I also believe that Serbia doesn't need the distraction of Kosovo as it modernizes and moves towards membership in the European Union," he says.

Indeed, some European officials say the international community must be careful not to play the Kosovo issue in a way that reinforces reactionary forces in the anticipated elections.

Such potential political implications have other experts cautioning about Kosovo's influence. "This goes beyond Kosovo and affects a number of countries in the greater Black Sea area that are fractured," says Nikolas Gvosdev, editor of the National Interest political journal in Washington. "You have to at least ask the question if a too-hasty move to independence in Kosovo encourages the disintegration of other states."

Howard LaFranchi is a staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

AMBASSADORS 2006 ONTARIO TOUR

The Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus are bringing a new experience to their audiences.

The chorus will host a lively woodwind quintet from Holland, known as "Hi-Five." The quintet play flutes, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and French horn. Samples of this music can be heard on their website at www.hi-five.nl

Their first joint venture delighted the Dutch audience when the Ambassadors did their third liberation tour in Holland in May 2005. Hi-Five's European tours appeal to lovers of classical, Christian, modern, pop and swing music.

In the 36 years of their singing, this concert is a unique first for the Ambassadors. Founding director Harold de Haan will again combine his passionate conducting with Laura Pin's delightful piano accompaniment.

See Calendar of Events for concert times and venues.

For further information contact:
Harold de Haan 905-389-2104 or
Rev. Arie VanEek 905-689-5266.

News

Canada turns to Niagara Falls for energy

Ontario wants to extract more hydroelectric power from Niagara Falls and close coal-burning plants

Fred Langan

NIAGARA FALLS, CANADA – Niagara Falls has meant honey moon since the late 19th century. Oscar Wilde made wisecracks about it; and a song about newlyweds shuffling off to Buffalo for a look at the falls is part of the classic 1933 musical, 42nd Street.

It's also the most powerful waterfall in North America, producing more hydroelectric power than any other waterfall in the world. They started making power here about the same time the honeymooners first arrived.

That means it's looking increasingly attractive to Ontario's government as an alternative power source as energy costs rise and the government struggles to make sure it has enough electricity.

The Ontario authorities have also vowed to shut down its coal-burning power plants.

Now the second largest tunneling project ever will bring more water to existing turbines on the Canadian side, generating enough new electricity to run 160,000 homes.

"The focus is on how to find as much clean and renewable energy as possible, and this fits the bill," says Emad Elsayed, vice president of hydroelectric development at Ontario Power Generation, which is owned by the Ontario government and operates the hydroelectric plants on the Canadian side of the falls.

The giant drilling machine, made by the Robbins Company of Solon, Ohio, started boring through hard rock in early September. The machine cuts through about 50 feet a day. At that speed, the 6.4 mile tunnel will be ready in 2009.

At 47 feet in diameter it is 1 1/2 times the width of the Channel Tunnel between England and France. And it was a lot easier boring under the soft chalk of the English Channel than through hard rock 460 feet below Niagara Falls.

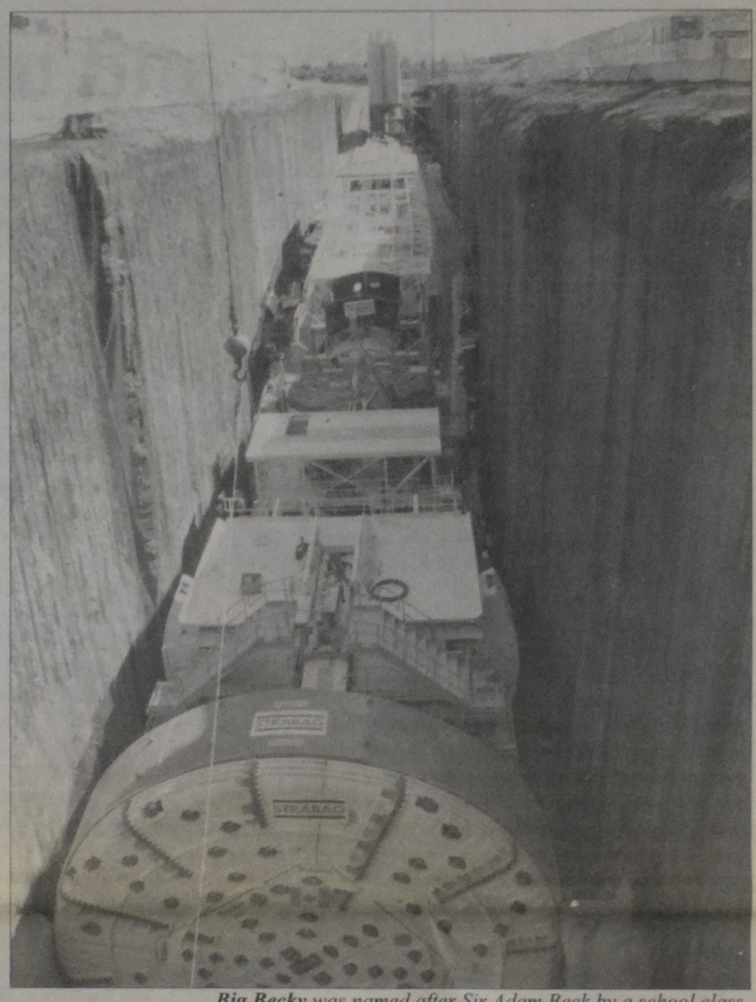
The $535-million tunnel will take 17,500 cubic feet of water per second from the Niagara River above the falls, to the Sir Adam Beck generating station below the falls.

"We are in effect adding more fuel by adding more water, making sure the existing turbines run at top capacity," says Mr. Elsayed.

The falls on the US side produce even more hydroelectric power than the Canadian side. All that water diversion means there is less water flowing over the falls. Hydroelectric projects on both the American and the Canadian sides divert 50 percent to 75 percent of the water in the Niagara River into tunnels to run turbines.

A 1950 US-Canadian treaty ensures there will be enough water to see, even after the new tunnel is built.

Fred Langan is a correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor



Big Becky was named after Sir Adam Beck by a school class

North Korea ... *continued from page 1*

nation subject to chronic starvation. Last year China's trade with North Korea grew to over US$1.5 billion and technical aid to $145 million.

Similarly, under South Korea's so-called "Sunshine Policy" the severely underdeveloped country received $1.2 billion in food, fertilizer and other aid over the last five years. A huge industrial park costing some $2.3 billion was begun as well as a railroad linking the two countries and a tourism project that cost Hyundai some $400 million. After the nuclear test, South Korea cancelled a massive shipment of food aid destined for the North and it is reconsidering the entire Sunshine Policy. Both China and South Korea have declared their diplomatic approach to Kim Jong Il's regime a failure. Both have taken his complete disregard for their interests as a slap in the face. Yet, both are severely limited in terms of punishing North Korea's leaders, for ill-considered actions could have severe repercussion on their own countries.

Even the "hard-nosed" U.S. has not exactly been ungiving. In 2001, for example, it sent 500,000 tons of food to North Korea, which promptly told its people that this was a form of tribute paid by the U.S. American food shipments were temporarily halted when reports came out of the country that North Korea was using food distribution as a tool to reward those most loyal to the regime and that a large share was being diverted to the military. Even in the mid-90's, when over 2 million North Koreans starved to death, support for the military came first. Over one-fourth of the country's GNP is spent on the military.

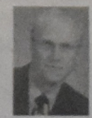
Whatever one might say about the foreign policy of the Bush administration, to say that it has failed in its negotiations with North Korea doesn't mean much in view of the fact that no one seems to have had much success in influencing the aptly named "Hermetic Kingdom".

While some have questioned Kim Jong Il's sanity, others see him as a sly fox, constantly manipulating even his strongest opponents into propping up his constantly floundering regime. This time, however, others counter, he has miscalculated. His nuclear gamble has caused former friends like China and South Korea to join with the U.S. and Japan in calling for sanctions.

Cutting off access to military equipment from abroad, to luxury goods and to travel abroad – proposals the U.N. is considering – may not do much to deflect this regime from its course. And although the U.S. might like to see the regime implode, the prospect fills China and South Korea with horror, for this would put serious strain on their economies. Many analysts say it would be a disaster of unprecedented proportions. As we saw in Iraq, the consequences of toppling a tyrannical regime are hard to calculate: they do not always mean greater peace and freedom.

The welfare of 23 million North Koreans also must be taken into account. And here Kim Jong Il and his cronies may have an advantage. In the past they have shown little hesitation in risking the lives of millions of their own people to maintain their own power, wringing concession after concession from those unwilling to destabilize the region. By taking this risky path Kim is in effect using his own people as hostages to inflate his own status among the nations. Perhaps he has begun to believe his own propaganda that he is a demi-god: he no longer exists to serve the nation but the nation exists to serve him.

As one door closes, another always opens.



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Editorial

Thanksgiving and utopian dreams

Harry der Nederlanden

Over the Thanksgiving weekend, we in the Niagara peninsula were blessed with gorgeous fall weather. The weather was mild, in most areas the trees were still at peak color, and the sun burnished them to maximum advantage.

Our youngest son Jonathan was coming home from Calvin and was able to get a ride as far as London, so my wife and I drove there to pick him up. Rather than take the major highways, we chose a more scenic route, zig-zagging through the countryside. "It may take a little longer," we told each other, "but this way we get to take in the flash and sparkle of the season."

We got more of the color tour than we had counted on, as we zigged when we should have zagged in a couple of places. Our son ended up waiting considerably longer at the Flying J Truckstop outside London than he'd figured on.

"We should have taken the highway," we told each other. But afterward someone who had taken the Queen Elizabeth Way to Hamilton that day, a journey half the distance, told us that it had taken her as long to get there as it took us to get to London. And although the escarpment between St. Catharines and Hamilton, rising up a couple of hundred feet in some places, was a feast for the eyes, I'm willing to bet that the people stuck on the QEW were in no mood to enjoy it.

My wife and I got abundant opportunities to soak up the fall colors that weekend: an outdoor wedding in the Dundas valley conservation area, driving our son back and forth to London, and joining our daughter and son-in-law for Thanksgiving dinner in Toronto. All told, we spent about eight hours driving across the landscape – with me wishing I was hiking it instead.

But you do see things driving that you don't see on the trail. This year I was struck by the fact that while from a distance the woods may look bright with the yellows, oranges and reds of autumn, when you're actually among the trees, most of the color is on the ground. The leaves at eye level are still quite green because the color change begins at the top.

We drove through a lot of farming country, of course, but we were struck by the large tracts of forest scattered between cultivated fields. Some line the routes of rivers and streams, but everywhere farmers have left groves and large stands of trees undisturbed. Maybe they too like trees as well as ploughed and planted fields.

Although the colorful trees are the main attraction in October, the sight of undulating fields of yellowing corn and bronze beans, fields of stubble dotted with huge round bales, and threshing machines spewing new crops into wagons fill the heart with appreciation.

Bucolic – that's the word that came to mind as we drove through Ontario farm country on our sun-drenched weekend. It's the word selected by a Polish graduate student who had come to the U.S. to study. This was about 20 years ago. He was an extremely bright and politically aware fellow who had been immersed in the turmoil of his own country. While studying in Buffalo, New York, he had crossed the border into Canada and taken much the same fall tour that we took this year.

We had been discussing literature and politics, and suddenly he was sharing his impressions of Canada. As he spoke the word "bucolic," a wistful, distant look came into his eyes.

As we talked, I realized that his tour through the Canadian countryside had filled him with dreams of a land beyond politics, beyond conflict and strife, in which people raised crops and harvested them in peace and celebrated Thanksgiving with hearts truly brimming with gratitude. Having a lot of political savvy, he knew, of course, that it was only appearance, only a dream kindled by the sun playing across the fields.

But as we took in the sights of the countryside, I recalled the look in his eyes and the tone of his voice as he spoke the word "bucolic"– a word that linked Canada in his mind with the long tradition of pastoral poetry praising the joys of the simple life close to the land. That poetry is usually not written by farmers, of course. It is usually written by city dwellers overwhelmed by their sense of busyness and self-importance. They imagine that whereas they are overburdened and stressed out by the responsibilities of running corporations and bureaucracies, farmers lead a much simpler existence defined by the rhythms of nature.

That picture has probably never been true, but today it is particularly skewed, as farming has not only become a complex business but has come under increasing pressure. International politics, globalization, oil prices, the stock market – all exert pressures on farming families.

Nevertheless, knowing all that, I was still seduced by that romantic vision of a way of life beyond anxiety and beyond politics, a life in which once receives the bounties of the land as if from the very hand of God.

At the same time, the sight of farmers peacefully going about their work amid the beauties of the fall day reminded me of those countries – far too many of them – where politics and war have made gathering in the crops a very uncertain, highly anxious business.

In North Korea, for example, now very much in the news, an entire nation has been mobilized for decades around the military. Many commentators have spoken about the paranoia of Kim Jong Il and his father before him, but that paranoia is not confined to the leadership. It is conveyed to all the people.

A recent story in *Time Magazine*, speaks of the "rituals of fear" practiced by Korean citizens, who are repeatedly roused to action by air-raid sirens warning them to snatch up their homemade gas masks and to block their windows with blankets. Children come home from school weeping with anxiety at the imminent attack from that distant demon America.

While the U.N. discusses sanctions, the people of North Korea prepare for another season of food shortages and starvation. Are North Koreans less intelligent, less hard-working than their southern counterparts? Of course not. Given similar opportunities, they too could be flourishing like their families in the south. Millions have starved in North Korea and millions more continue to suffer and live in misery through no fault of their own, but because of politics.

The North-South divide in Korea, we will remember, had its origins in the politics of communism. The politics of paranoia practiced in Korea has deep ties with the politics of Stalin. Stalin, too, caused the starvation of millions as he sought to engineer a new future for the people who had fallen under his regime. He too became so obsessed with the constant struggle to maintain power over against real and illusory enemies that he needed a network of concentration camps, secret police and constant manipulation of knowledge to keep reality at bay.

Yet, politics is simply the broadest expression of human culture. The word "culture" reminds us of its roots in the soil, in the cultivation of the land to provide us with crops to get us through the winter and through the lean years. That requires more than farming know-how. Joseph, for example, helped Egypt get through years of drought by good governance – actually, by imposing heavy taxes in the form of grain.

Communist politics was driven by a dream of greater simplicity – getting rid of money and the middle-man. The capitalist was, after all, nothing but a parasite, a non-producer. In the early writings of Marx one can still catch the romantic vision of a return to the land and the virtues of a people unadulterated by money – and politics. Communism in its utopian version was really the overcoming of the need for politics and politicians – as well as capitalists.

You might say that my own romantic dream journey across our farmlands was steeped in the same longings as those of Marx, Stalin, Kim Jong Il and their followers. C. S. Lewis liked to talk of that deep memory and yearning in the human heart for the lost Paradise. For him too those longings could be triggered by pastoral scenes – and by pastoral literature – by scenes of shepherds tending their sheep and playing their flutes.

But we are no longer in Paradise, and politics cannot bring it back. To forget this seems a small thing, but it has not brought us bucolic scenes and a return to the simple rhythms of nature, it has brought instead starvation and the murder of millions. Yes, poetry, even pastoral poetry, can be dangerous.

It can lull us into the belief that we can take hold of the Kingdom and pull without taking the detour of the cross. In the September issue of *Christianity Today*, Paul Marshall warns Christians against the utopian temptations of "prophetic politics." Even believers are not immune to the temptation that they have a short-cut to a better world. Armed with a favorite text, a Christian slogan, a millennial vision, we are tempted to think that if only all contrary opinion were silenced or overcome, if only others shared our way of seeing, the goods of this bountiful earth would simply tumble into our laps and into our barns.

Of course, then we could also cancel Thanksgiving. Why thank God for what we can accomplish ourselves?

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Harry Houtman receives Gordon Nelson Award

Harry Houtman has become the second recipient of the Gordon Nelson Award, given by the Canadian Charitable Annuity Association to recognize someone who has distinguished him- or herself in serving the community and furthering the mission of Canadian charities.

Harry is one of the founders and is currently the president of Link Charity Canada and also serves the Christian Blind Mission International as a gift planning officer.

Harry introduced the gift annuities to Christian Stewardship Services many years ago during his tenure there. He has also lent his expertise to the CRC Extension Fund, which has been a great boon to many CRC Churches and Christian schools.

More recently, Harry created Link Charity as a service linking donors with charities to provide planned giving instruments of various kinds. Less than eight years old, Link Charity has contributed greatly to facilitate charitable giving to the benefit of donors, charitable organizations and those they serve.

Harry was honored for willingly and unselfishly giving of his time, energy and wisdom to help gift planning officers for other charities to become established.

Three simple ways to identify stroke

During a BBQ, a friend stumbled and took a little fall. She assured everyone that she was fine (they offered to call paramedics) and just tripped over a brick because of her new shoes. They got her cleaned up and got her a new plate of food. While she appeared a bit shaken up, Ingrid went about enjoying herself the rest of the evening.

Ingrid's husband called later telling everyone that his wife had been taken to the hospital, and a few hours later Ingrid passed away. She had suffered a stroke at the BBQ.

Had they known how to identify the signs of a stroke, perhaps Ingrid would be with us today. Some don't die. They end up in a helpless, hopeless condition instead.

It only takes a minute to read this....

A neurologist says that if he can get to a stroke victim within three hours he can totally reverse the effects of a stroke...totally. He said the trick was getting a stroke recognized, diagnosed, and then getting the patient medically cared for within three hours, which is tough.

Recognizing a stroke

Thank God for the sense to remember the "3" steps, STR. Sometimes symptoms of a stroke are difficult to identify. Unfortunately, the lack of awareness spells disaster. The stroke victim may suffer severe brain damage when people nearby fail to recognize the symptoms of a stroke.

Now doctors say a bystander can recognize a stroke by asking three simple questions:

– Ask the individual to *smile*.

– Ask the person to *talk*. To speak a simple sentence (coherently) (e.g. It is sunny out today.)

– Ask him or her to *raise both arms*.

[NOTE: Another sign of a stroke is this: Ask the person to stick out his or her tongue: if the tongue is crooked, if it goes to one side or the other that is also an indication of a stroke]

If he or she has trouble with *any one* of these tasks, call 911 immediately and describe the symptoms to the dispatcher.

Women and CRC Synod

Allow me to respond to the article "A long road in the....." issue of the *Christian Courier*. Women in office has had my sympathy throughout the years. I feel compelled, as time goes on, to speak out on it. I have worked with women in meetings and on church councils for more than 20 years, and women have been a blessing. Men make a little more sense with a few women around the table. Besides, three of my daughters have served as either elder or deacon. I take great pride in that.

Having women in office is one of the fruits of the preaching of the gospel The gospel is not stale, it moves us forward and it liberates. It is important to practice what we preach. For example, not long ago I heard one of our pastors preach on the priesthood of all believers. Then six weeks later he voted against women in office at synod. This boggles my mind.

We have only ourselves to blame for the quagmire we find ourselves in on the role of women in the church. As time went on our leadership appointed many committees to find agreement. In the process we dug in on both sides. My wife made me aware that the content of the unanimous report of synod's committee on women was biblically and theologically unsound. The committee and delegates failed to understand that when women become co-workers they also become co-responsible. As well, there is no such a thing as a seven year sabbatical. A sabbatical is the seventh year. Moreover, this compromise solution is intended to keep the church united. It does not. Unity is at the foot of the cross and nowhere else. We must be careful not to declare every action of synod Spirit inspired.

So all you Vickys, Judys, Arlenes and Jo-Maes be patient with us. We know that the ecclesiastical mill grinds slowly. Keep courage.

Evert Wassink
Forest, Ontario

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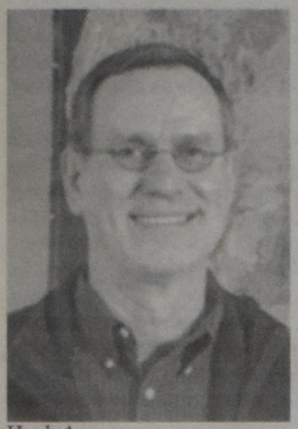
Education

Calvin College seats its elephant in a special chair


Henk Aay

Considering that West Michigan has the largest Dutch population enclave in the U.S., with nearly a quarter million people of Dutch ancestry, perhaps it should not have been a surprise that a sizeable crowd showed up for the inaugural lecture of the first in Dutch Language and Culture at Calvin.

Yet even the first holder of that chair, Calvin professor of geography and environmental studies Henk Aay, admitted he was shocked, pleasantly so, when he strode to the podium in the Prince Conference Center, on a Tuesday evening in September, to deliver his talk, titled "Positioning a Heritage," and looked out at an audience of over 400 people.

Aay gave those in attendance a memorable address as he wove together a series of seemingly disparate elements into an entertaining and educational 45-minute overview of the Netherlands, Calvin's heritage, its future, the role of the new Meijer Chair and much more.

Aay, a native Dutch speaker, who began at Calvin in 1983, will serve an initial three-year term as the Meijer Chair. And in his first public lecture he set a beautiful tone for what might lie ahead.

Aay's scholarly interests have several focal points: the history and philosophy of geography as well as cultural and historical geography. He has published research on the settlement geography of the Dutch in West Michigan, on the relationships between nature and culture in works of fiction, on environmental advertising, on the history of geographic education, on the accuracy of geography textbooks, and on the nature of the cultural landscape. Currently, Aay is writing a book on Arie van Deursen, an important, but forgotten Dutch geographer.

His talk touched on many of his interests. But he began with an interesting example, close to the heart of the man for whom the Meijer Chair is named.

"Hendrik Meijer, Fred's father," said Aay, "did Dutch ethnicity a big favor when in 1933, just before he opened his first grocery store in Greenville, Michigan, he changed the Anglicized spelling of Meyer with a y back to the Dutch ij."

Aay continued: "As a visual cue that distinctive ligature in the Meijer name has served the Meijer stores well. It also serves as a visible and widespread contemporary ethnic identification throughout the region. The ij ligature is the most distinctive quality of written Dutch and whenever one encounters it on the page or in the landscape, it points to Dutch culture."

Aay contrasted that with his own surname which, upon immigration of the Aaij family to Canada, became Aay and never returned to the authentic Dutch spelling!

The donation from Meijer will go toward two tracks at Calvin. Part of the funds will support and ensure the continuation of Dutch language instruction at Calvin. The other track will underwrite efforts to promote understanding of past and present-day Netherlands.

Aay says those efforts will include speakers, workshops, seminars and other efforts to help the Calvin campus, West Michigan and Calvin's broader constituency understand the Netherlands of today and of the past.

He noted in his inaugural address that some might think a chair in Dutch language and culture to be a step backward for Calvin College, not helpful in building greater diversity and an attempt to bring back or hold on to the "commanding Dutchness" of this place.

"There are others," he added, "who have been made to feel as persons who did not belong or were not as good, made to feel as outsiders in this college, in area churches

Eternal Student

Peter Schuurman

The Baby Genius Edutainment Complex

On September 13th a stranger, our baby, now named Joseph John, crawled his way into the light of Canadian public medical care. Our hearts burst with a tender wonder and gratitude, and we are reminded, as Wendell Berry said, "We live within mystery, by miracle." Our education under Joseph's tutelage begins, and while there is deep joy in the class, the lessons come with a load of labor.

My wife was asked by a colleague, "What are labor pains like?" and she offered this vivid description. "Think of it in this way," she said. "All your internal organs are being shoved into an old fashioned hamburger grinder that has been lodged at the centre of your pelvis. When a contraction happens, that's someone turning the crank. That's what it feels like."

I certainly do not suffer from pregnancy envy. The grind, however, continues in different ways after the moment of birth. Continuous sleep deprivation, for example, is a cruel way to welcome new mothers and fathers to parenthood. I wish crying sounded more like ocean waves lapping against the shore than like a cat caught in the bedroom door.

It seems, however, that there is still more labor to come. I've been reading some of the literature on parenting, and the vocation has become quite a definitive science. Caregivers who fail to master this science, the research warns, may not only cruelly deprive their child in the present, but maliciously ruin their child's entire future.

Extreme parenting

It appears there is a window that is open during the first few years, a window of opportunity for the child to learn and grow and become great. After those years, the window closes forever, and what parents neglect to give their child when the window is open is eternally withheld from him or her. The child will thus be deprived of greatness, fated to languish with the mass of ordinary souls. *But no pressure.*

The *Atlantic Monthly* had a column last summer entitled "Extreme Parenting" that described a new passion for making gifted children, an industry the author Alissa Quart affectionately named "The Baby Genius Edutainment Complex." This includes everything from baby sign language to the IQ testing of toddlers, toys and videos from such labels as Baby Einstein, Brainy Baby, BabyPlus, and Athletic Baby, and the work of foundations like Parents' Action for Children, whose motto is "The first years last forever." "Get a head start in life for your child" they all cajole, "they will reach their milestones earlier." French immersion pre-school, the new "diaper free" method, and magical baby formula – the products all promise power. Again, *no pressure*.

Imagine being a new parent, caught in a rapture of love and responsibility for your baby, and hearing the slogans touted by preying corporations. Wouldn't you want the best for your child? Don't you want your child to be able to compete well in the market of schools, jobs, and mates, and if a few videos and a little shove at age two or three work magic on the developing brain, why not give them an edge on their peers? To use that phrase of apocalyptic power, you don't want your child *left behind*, do you?

The gift of boredom

I don't buy it. Literally. According to this article, the facts are that while things like language are learned more easily while young, "early doesn't mean infancy." In fact, any time before puberty is equally opportune. Furthermore, all the multi-media and gadgets in the world don't hold a candle to a real, live playmate. In fact, these new technologies can even be damaging, in so far as they prevent children from playing outside and exploring the world around them. Even boredom – taking one's time, waiting for desire to awaken – can be an important part of a child's development.

I recognize that parenthood is labor, but I'm not going to let pressure from the latest glossy baby magazines ignite needless fears and worldly competitive drives. We live in an over-stimulated society as it is, and I want my boy's imagination to be lit by what you might call local resources: simple stories, a walk in the woods, the baby talk of relatives and neighbors, and scrawling indecipherable lines on old pieces of paper. Virtue is more valuable to me than genius, and character development doesn't require multi-media or $40 name-brand toys. In fact, the parents who need the most help nurturing their infants are probably the ones least able to afford the kind of products and services that would truly benefit their children. This becomes an industry exclusively for nervous over-salaried parents.

Some kind people sent us cards to congratulate us on the occasion of Joseph's birth. One enigmatic card seems to say it all: it reads, under the scripted "Congratulations" in very primitive printing: "To your perious gift." I don't know what it means, but it sounds apt: a perious gift indeed.

Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed Education Mission Leader and resides in Guelph, Ontario.

and in other West Michigan organizations by an often unselfconscious discrimination, a clubbishness and a sidelining on the part of a Dutch ethnic majority."

But, he said, this ethnocentrism is plain and simply wrong. Yet the opposite of ethnocentrism, he said, is denying and disowning the presence of a cultural tradition or confining it to a dusty corner.

"Sometimes," he said with a sly smile, "I feel that at Calvin the Dutch heritage is the elephant in the room that no one wants to or is capable of addressing."

But by not addressing it, insists Aay, even with tensions, the heritage is neglected and in neglect it becomes an empty shell.

The Meijer Chair, said Aay, empowers the college to address its heritage in ways that both recognize the past and look to the future.

"The Netherlands is an important part of Calvin's heritage," Aay said in an interview prior to his talk, "but we have changed in many ways in recent years with students and professors with a much greater diversity of backgrounds. And that's great. In addition, through off-campus interims and semesters abroad our students have the ability to study in numerous countries. Their international understanding and experience has expanded, which is also great. Yet I believe that better understanding where the college came from will help us stick to and further articulate our educational and scholarly mission."

Aay did his undergraduate work in geography and planning at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada and his Ph.D. in geography was earned at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Born in the Netherlands, Aay journeyed to Canada with his family at the age of 13. That country remained his home for 25 years and he says its strong British-inherited tradition in geography captured his interest and enthusiasm already in high school.

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Freedom

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

Things are changing as public trust continues to diminish and the perceived threats to our security increase. More windows are being barred, more security guards walk our malls and large public buildings, more video surveillance systems are being installed, and home security systems have become big business as many home insurance companies require them before they'll agree to take you on. Vehicle security systems are essential in places like Montreal (they were rare 20 years ago) and now almost all retailers (except grocery stores) security tag their merchandise, and one has to walk through a screening area to leave most large stores.

Retailers still manage to offer a "help yourself" shopping experience, but if that 'freedom' begins to cost too much, our shopping experience may revert to 'jewelry-store' style shopping where a store clerk presents the item to you for viewing and purchase. This would be typical of shopping in most of the developing world.

Our freedom is under attack. This is something that needs our care and attention. That's where stewardship fits in – we care.

Consider our Canadian national anthem: "God keep our land, glorious and free." Personally, I don't care for the "glorious" part – save that for God – but the "free" part is something we need to be concerned and praying about.

Later, in our anthem we repeat the chorus, "We stand on guard for Thee." That would be the stewardship part – guarding is something we say we will do when we sing this chorus. I believe it's not just military type guarding as our peace-keeping missions do, but it is also a public one. With the rise in crime and the subsequent curtailing of our freedom – our public Canadian guarding performance is slipping.

Recently, I came across an interesting parallel. The Heidelberg Catechism, written almost 500 years ago, speaks of Christ's kingly role in this way: "…our eternal king, who governs us by his Word and Spirit, and who guards us and keeps us in the freedom he has won for us" (Lord's day 12, article 31). Clearly Jesus has won us freedom from the sin that would have condemned us but he did not stop there. Jesus is also guarding that freedom that we now have through him. Jesus finished the work of paying for our sin, however, he does not leave us on our own. He knows we can abuse the new freedom we have and so he continues to work to guard and keep us in that freedom.

How can we guard our freedom? If we follow Jesus' example, it means that we need to work at it. It's not enough to just "stand on guard"! Here follow some tips for proactive guarding.

Stewardly Tip: As stewards of Freedom we…

1. Speak up: don't simply accept the lowering standards of morality (letters and gatherings, especially during campaigns).
2. Act: citizens need to speak up when witnessing shoplifting or other more "petty" crimes. Don't allow perpetrators opportunity.
3. Elect leaders known for their integrity and stand on moral ground.
4. Volunteer for citizen's patrol' – armed with cell phones.
5. Teach, model and train children about the consequences of freedom abused. Our freedom is built on a citizenship that is honest, just and law abiding.
6. Pray for our leaders, our justice system, our police and our land.

Readers: Share your 'Stewardly Tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestion and your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask for more details.

Next issue: Legacy

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario. Rick's email: rickd@csservices.ca

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Church

Britain's churches face a continuing fall in attendance

LONDON (Zenit.org) – The numbers of Sunday churchgoers is still falling in England, according to a report by the British organization Christian Research. The decline, however, seems to be slowing.

The report, the 2005 English Church Census, shows that from 1998-2005 "only" a half-million people stopped going to church. The good news was that this was half the loss sustained in the nine-year period prior to 1998.

The press release accompanying the report was titled, "Pulling out of the Nosedive," and it claimed: "Many churches in England are in a healthier state now than seven years ago."

The census found that there are two major reasons for the slowing decline: the number of churches are growing; plus there was a considerable increase of ethnic minority churchgoers, especially blacks.

The data were collected from surveys sent to 37,500 churches, of which about half responded. The attendance figures are those for Sunday, May 8, 2005. According to the census 6.3 per cent of the population, just over 3.1 million people, are now in church on an average Sunday, compared with 7.5 per cent in 1998.

Just over a third of churches, 34 per cent, are growing. This compares with 21 per cent in 1998. A further 16 per cent are stable, up from 14 per cent in 1998. The proportion of churches in decline has fallen from 65 per cent in 1998 to 50 per cent. Nevertheless, the losses from declining churches outweigh the gains from those with increasing numbers. And this continuing decline is taking place in a situation where church attendance is already at extremely low levels.

The Catholic and Anglican churches accounted for over half of the numbers in the census, with each having just over 800,000 people in church the day the data were collected. Next in order of numbers were the Methodist, Pentecostal and Baptist churches.

Numbers for the Catholic Church were slightly ahead of the Anglican level. But compared with 1998 the decline in attendance for the Catholic Church was much greater than for the Anglicans. In 1998 the Sunday participation for Catholics was just over 1.2 million, meaning that in the previous seven years their numbers have dropped by almost a third.

Another problem is that churchgoers are significantly older on average than the population. No fewer than 29 per cent of churchgoers are 65 or over, compared with 16 per cent of the population. Believers in the younger age groups also tend to go to church less often, and there is a progressive decline in belief as age drops, with very few churchgoers in the younger age brackets. Less than 10 per cent go to church in the 20-29 age group, and this falls to 5 per cent in the 15-19 group.

Regarding the question of increased participation by ethnic groups, the census found that blacks now account for 10 per cent of all churchgoers in England, with an additional 7 per cent from other non-white ethnic groups.

"It can die"

The Chicago Tribune examined the crisis of faith in Britain last May. The article noted that 72 per cent of the British people called themselves Christian in the 2001 census, but only 8 per cent regularly attend services.

"Britain is showing the world how religion as we have known it can die," Callum Brown told the *Chicago Tribune*. Brown is a historian at the University of Dundee in Scotland. He was pessimistic about the future, observing that after two generations of people with little experience of regular church participation, it will be difficult to turn the situation around.

A new ad campaign is trying to reach to young people in order to overcome this problem. The campaign's tactics, among them an image showing Christ's face on the side of a beer glass, have come under criticism for their superficiality. The campaign is being organized by an ecumenical group, the Churches' Advertising Network.

Another tactic of the campaign, reported the *Telegraph*, is setting up a page for Jesus on the MySpace Internet site, a social networking page very popular among adolescents.

Amid doubts over the future of organized religion in Britain, a column from the *Guardian* newspaper writer Madeleine Bunting called for a greater contribution by faith in today's society. In her column Bunting observed that there is "a vacuum of purpose, value and meaning," in the major groupings on the political spectrum.

Pentecostals have a major influence on life globally

Chris Herlinger

New York (ENI) – A stereotype of Pentecostals and charismatic Christians as apolitical and retreating from social concerns is not valid, with sizeable numbers of those surveyed in the Unites States asserting the right of religious groups to express political views.

The study by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, a Washington-based research group, matches other studies and anecdotal evidence that Pentecostals and charismatic Christians are having a major influence on religious life globally.

"This survey demonstrates that Pentecostal beliefs and practices are literally reshaping the face of Christianity throughout the developing world," Luis Lugo, Pew Forum director said in announcing the study on October 5.

In a conference with US journalists, Lugo said that for its adherents, Pentecostalism "is delivering" in part because of its stress on an "intimate and joyous relationship with God", and its ability to adapt to local cultures, particularly those that have strong beliefs in the "spirit world". He noted, "This is a group of folks for whom the world of spirits is very much alive."

Pentecostals have generally not been seen as active politically in the United States as have evangelical Christians, a major political voice in the US for some 30 years.

Still, in nine of 10 countries surveyed, at least half of Pentecostals and charismatic Christians said religious groups should express their views on social and political questions. The figures were even higher for Pentecostals in the United States, with 79 per cent saying such groups should do so – more than the 61 per cent of the US public as a whole.

John Green, a Pew Forum senior fellow in religion and American politics said: "Pentecostals were once thought of as non-political, at least in the United States. That doesn't seem to be the case anymore."

Aside from the United States, the Pew survey was conducted in Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, India, the Philippines and South Korea.

The survey found that Pentecostal communities are mostly theologically conservative, though their views often parallel the social views of their wider national communities.

Many Pentecostals don't speak in tongues

Speaking in tongues, long a hallmark of Pentecostalism, is not practiced by a significant number of charismatic and Pentecostal Christians, according to a recent survey conducted by Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life.

The survey found that for Pentecostals the experience of divine healing was more prominent than the emphasis on speaking in tongues.

In six of the 10 countries surveyed, at least 40 percent of Pentecostals said they never pray or speak in tongues.

"I think that the classic Pentecostal belief that speaking in tongues was the real evidence of the second baptism of the Holy Spirit is, at least in practice, not widely accepted around the world," said John Green, senior fellow at the Pew Forum and a longtime observer of religion and politics.

Luis Lugo, director of the Pew Forum, suggested that the definition of the movement as a tongues-speaking segment of Christianity may need to be revisited. "Based on these findings, we need to rethink that considerably," he said.

The survey used the umbrella term "renewalists" for Pentecostals and charismatics. It described Pentecostals as those who belong to classical Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God or the Church of God in Christ, as well as newer groups such as the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Brazil. Charismatics include Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Christians who believe they have experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit but are not members of Pentecostal denominations.

The survey also found that in six of the 10 countries surveyed – Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, Kenya, Nigeria and the Philippines – renewalists comprise a majority of the overall Protestant population.

"I don't think it's too far-fetched at this point to seriously consider whether Christianity is well on its way to being Pentecostalized, … certainly in the developing world," said Lugo.

And in nine out of the 10 countries surveyed – the exception being India – at least half of charismatics and Pentecostals said religious groups should express their views on political and social matters.

Salvation Army in Moscow ruled non-military organization

Sophia Kishkovsky

Moscow (ENI) – A leader of the Salvation Army in Russia has welcomed a decision by the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg that the denomination's Moscow branch had been wrongly denied registration after being labelled a "quasi-military organization".

In its unanimous decision on the case, which was lodged in 2001, the court ruled that Russia was in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights and awarded the Salvation Army 10,000 euros in damages.

Religious organizations operating in Russia were required to re-register under a 1997 law. The Salvation Army was granted federal registration but Moscow authorities refused to re-register the local branch, which is known in Russia's capital for its ministry to street children and the hungry.

Moscow officials described the Salvation Army as a military organization in structure and hierarchy, and thereby a security threat. This was upheld by a Moscow court in 2000.

Members of the Salvation Army, founded in England in the 19th century, are called soldiers, officers and captains. It worked in tsarist Russia, but was dissolved in 1923 as an "anti-Soviet organization".

Major Aleksandr Kharkov, the denomination's secretary for Russia development, told Ecumenical News International that federal registration had allowed it to continue its work in Moscow. But the recent judgement alleviated the Moscow court's ruling that the denomination was military in character.

"It's more the moral side," he said. "It's an insult. After this people could call us a military organization. Now, all the accents are in the right place."

Philippine nun says Christianity helped ruin indigenous culture

Maurice Malanes

Manila (ENI) – Human rights activists and members of the Filipino community in Britain conducted prayer vigils during a visit this week by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, urging action to end political killings of indigenous people, among others, in the Philippines.

Recent killings of political activists have led to indigenous and community leaders in the Philippines becoming increasingly afraid to speak out against mining or logging projects, many of them on traditional ancestral lands of the country's 15 million indigenous peoples, *Independent Catholic News* reported on September 13.

But according to some Roman Catholic leaders, indigenous people in the Philippines have not only faced the destruction of their lands through such excavation projects, but Christianity has also played a role in ruining their traditional culture.

"The colonialists brought a dualist [soul and body] type of Christianity, which divided indigenous peoples and alienated them from their holistic culture," said Sister Pat Babiera, who heads the justice and peace desk of Marbel diocese in the southern Philippines. "The challenge now is how to deconstruct this Western-introduced Christian dualism."

Babiera was among 31 participants at a national workshop in Manila, which examined how indigenous people, the government, the Church and academics could help protect the traditional knowledge of the country's indigenous peoples, who make up less than 20 per cent of this Southeast Asian nation's 89 million population.

"Our indigenous religion is so close to our everyday lives such as our farming cycles," Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, chairperson of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples Issues, told the workshop. "When the dominant Christian religions came in as part of colonialism, the early missionaries discouraged our traditional religion, thus separating our spirituality from our everyday lives."

Some indigenous leaders advocate the country's former colonizers, Spain (1521-1898) and the United States (1898-1946) pay reparations. But Babiera said that since 1991 the Catholic Church, aware of its impact on more than 80 per cent of the population, had shifted its mission approach to what she calls "total salvation".

"We no longer convert people to become Catholics, but we respect other people's ways of worship and spirituality," Babiera told Ecumenical News International. "And we no longer stress the soul, but the whole person."

In southern Philippines, Babiera said part of the new approach of the Catholic Church was to become involved with an inter-religious "dialogue on life" in which Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, and indigenous peoples strengthened their sense of community through organic farming, reforestation and other environmental conservation programs.

Christians in India beaten, detained following media reports

NEW DELHI (Compass Direct News) – A church in Uttar Pradesh's Jaunpur district cancelled its weekly meeting on October 10 due to tensions in the region following false reports of forcible conversion in newspapers. The reports led to two attacks in the past week. A local Christian who requested anonymity told Compass that tensions began on October 4, when local editions of national Hindi dailies published reports on the supposed forced conversion of 350 Hindu villagers to Christianity in Belahta village. More than 1,000 people, mostly believers from Belahta and nearby villages, had prayed and worshipped in a tent pitched outside the house of a convert. The next day, local villagers along with extremists of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) and police vandalized the structure. They threatened that if the meetings continued or any Christian from outside the village was seen again, they would resort to unprecedented violence.

Court in Nigeria condemns militant Muslim leader to death

YOLA, Nigeria, October 11 (Compass Direct News) – A Muslim militant Islamic leader who spearheaded religious conflict that engulfed northern Nigeria in 1984 has been sentenced to death by a high court here in the northern state of Adamawa. The Yola High Court on Tuesday (October 10) ordered Musa Suleiman, also known as Musa Makaniki, leader of an unorthodox Islamic sect known as Maitatsine, to death by hanging. He was convicted on all three counts against him: homicide, inciting public disturbance, and criminal conspiracy. Justice Bamare Bansi, also the chief judge of Adamawa state, said in his judgment that there was overwhelming evidence that proved the Muslim militant leader masterminded a large-scale religious riot in which an estimated 3,000 Christians and Muslims died. Suleiman just smiled when the death sentence was pronounced.

On the anniversary of Nigeria's independence, president urges Nigerians to turn to God

President Olusegun Obasanjo

Obed Minchakpu

Abuja, Nigeria (ENI) – President Olusegun Obasanjo has urged Nigerians to turn to God if the country is to overcome intractable problems that have bedevilled Africa's most populous nation during its 46 years of nationhood.

"We have come out of the dark past and as we continue to work together and plan together, our dear country, in God's name, we will continue to make progress," Obasanjo said in a nationwide broadcast on October 1. "We are a strong, God-fearing, proud and productive people; we must continue to make progress."

Recalling the 46 years since Nigeria gained independence from Britain, Obasanjo said, "Yes, we have had some missteps and challenges; mistakes have been made, difficulties have been created, but in all these God has made us to continue to survive as one strong indivisible nation."

Nigeria became an independent nation on October 1, 1960. The country has an estimated population of 132 million people, of whom 50 per cent are thought to be Muslims and 40 per cent Christians. Christians predominate in the southern part of Nigeria, while Muslims dominate the north.

Giving a sermon to mark the anniversary that was attended by dignitaries including Obasanjo, the Methodist bishop of Abuja, Ola Makinde, said: "Let me say here that the stability of Nigeria is the corporate responsibility of everybody. The fight against corruption should not be for politicians alone. It should involve teachers, doctors and all other sectors."

Obasanjo, a Christian southerner, urged both Christians and Muslims to use the anniversary to reflect soberly on the state of the nation and pray for a positive change and deliverance from evil-inspired values that have wreaked havoc in the west African country.

Having led Nigeria for seven years, Obasanjo said: "I believe we are now getting things right in this country and we are moving on the right path. To continue to get it right requires all hands to move towards the part of God, particularly those who claim to be children of the saving grace."

God speaks

Has any people heard the voice of God speaking . . . and survived?

The following is the first part of the Convocation message given at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary by Dr. Albert Mohler, its president, on August 24, 2006. We will carry the second part in the next issue.

Albert Mohler

Deuteronomy chapter four is one of the great touchstone passages in all of Scripture. As we come to this passage, my heart and soul are absolutely struck by the question – a rhetorical question, but a very real question – asked in verse 33: "Has any people heard the voice of the Lord, the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, and survived?"

What brings us here? What brings us to this institution, to this campus, to this hour, ready for learning and study? Something summons us here. There is some mandate, some basis, some foundation. This is a theological seminary and college. We dare to speak of God. We even dare to define what we do here as Christian education. What an audacious claim! We actually say that here we teach what God has taught.

This would be a baseless and foundationless claim, an incredible claim, if God had not spoken from the midst of the fire and allowed us to hear. On what authority are we here? To dare to speak of these things, we must speak invoking the authority of God, who alone could speak these things, reveal himself, and tell us what we must know. This is the answer to the question that haunts the postmodern mind – on what basis can we claim to know anything?

The great philosophical crisis of our day is an epistemological crisis. It is a crisis of knowing, a crisis of knowledge. In particular, it is a challenge for Christianity and for the Christian thinker, the Christian theologian, the Christian minister, the Christian preacher, and the Christian institution. How do we know what we claim to know? How dare we teach what we dare to teach? As Francis Schaeffer understood well, and he took the answer as the title of his most significant contribution: We speak because *He Is There and He Is Not Silent.*

I first read that book as a sixteen-year-old, and to be honest, I think the greatest assurance I got from it is that some smart person believed in God. Even at that age, however, and lacking the vocabulary to understand what I was experiencing, I understood the epistemological crisis. How do we know anything? How can we speak of anything? And furthermore, how do we jump from the empirical knowledge of what we can observe to speaking of God whom we cannot see? To claim knowledge in terms of empirical and scientific observation and study and phenomenology is audacious enough. But to speak of the immortal invisible God only wise – that is a new leap of audacity altogether.

Dr. Schaeffer understood the epistemological problem of silence, the claim and the implication that we can know nothing. And he understood that there is only one epistemological answer – revelation. Thus Christianity depends upon a Christian epistemology or a Christian theory of knowledge that is based in revelation alone.

There is no greater challenge than this – to make certain that we know on what authority we speak, and that we know on what authority we know. In Deuteronomy chapter four, Israel is reminded of the authority by which they live. They are reminded that they heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire and survived.

This great sermon, of course, comes at the conclusion of the introductory section to Deuteronomy. It begins and ends with a parallel structure, and in the middle is a large section reflecting the form of a suzerainty treaty, an Ancient Near Eastern convention whereby a conqueror sets down the terms of surrender. In this case, of course, the conqueror is none other than the Lord God Jehovah, the conquered is none other than his own chosen nation, Israel. God sets down the terms, and they are very easy to understand. It comes down to a very simple formula: hear and obey and live. Refuse to hear, disobey, and bear the wrath of God.

In this tremendous sermon, God speaks through his servant and prophet Moses. Looking back to the covenant at Horeb, obedience equals blessing, and disobedience equals cursing. This generation ought to know that. For this is the generation that survived, that was kept alive, through forty years of wandering in the wilderness. They had witnessed the death of their own parents because they disobeyed and did not trust the Lord.

MOSES COMING DOWN FROM MOUNT SINAI

And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony were in his hand . . . And the tables were the work of God . . . (Exodus 32: 15, 16)

And now as the children of Israel are being prepared for the conquest of the Holy Land, they are reminded that they heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire and survived. As the Lord is preparing this new generation, we find in this sermon exhortation and memory mixed together – the memory of God's great saving work in bringing Israel out of captivity to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the great work of God in keeping the children of Israel alive through the forty years of wandering in the wilderness.

We call this book Deuteronomy – deutero nomos – the second giving of the law, because in the very next chapter we will confront again the Ten Commandments. The theme is very clear. Israel, in terms of its elect status, is the chosen nation of God, and that special status is represented in Torah, in this word, this law, even in these Ten Words. The central truth is that the Lord God spoke to his people, and they heard, and they survived. Moses says, "Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when the Lord said to me, 'Assemble the people to me, that I may let them hear my words so that they may learn to fear me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.' You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud, and thick gloom."

The giving of the Ten Commandments cannot be separated from the narrative context in which it comes. The propositional truth which is in the law comes in the midst of a history of a people and God's dealing with that people. It is a relational revelation, and it is a dramatic revelation. Israel is reminded not only of what they heard, but of the context in which they heard it. "The mountain burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens, darkness, cloud and thick gloom. Then the Lord spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form – only a voice. So he declared to you his covenant which he commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments; and he wrote them on two tablets of stone." The Lord God spoke to you from the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but you saw no form, only a voice. A voice!

Israel, heard the Lord, but they did not see him. This is not a God who is seen, but a God who is heard. The contrast with the idols is very clear. The idols are seen, but they do not speak. The one true and living God is not seen, but he is heard. The contrast is intentional, it is graphic, and it is clear. We speak because we have heard.

The theme of these verses, especially in verses ten through thirteen, is the sheer gift of this. The revelation of God is sheer mercy. We have no right to hear God speak. We have no claim upon his voice. We have no right to demand that he would speak. We are accustomed to pointing to the cross of Christ and saying, there is mercy! But at Horeb, too, there was mercy. There is mercy whenever God speaks.

There is the danger that contemporary evangelicals think of the doctrine of revelation primarily as an epistemological problem. Even those who hold to a high doctrine of Scripture – affirming the inerrancy of Scripture, verbal inspiration, propositional truth – are in danger of thinking of revelation primarily in epistemological terms. To be sure, there is an epistemological question, and there is an epistemological authority. But the reality is, this is mercy. It is a gift.

Professor Eugene Merrill has said that while it is quite remarkable that no other nation had ever heard God speak out of the fire and lived to tell about it, the fact is, there are not even any other peoples that heard the voice of the Lord speak out of the fire and didn't live to tell about it. The Lord God spoke uniquely and particularly to Israel and allowed them to survive.

The background to all this, of course, is the paganism of that day. The idols were many in those days, and all of them were silent. In fact, the silence of the idols is a pervasive biblical theme. Think of 1 Kings 18, and the battle of the gods and Elijah. Think of Elijah as he waits and watches the prophets of the Ashteroth and the Baal jumping around the altar and lacerating their bodies so that the blood flows down into the ground – all this to get Baal's attention. But as we are told in 1 Kings 18, there was no voice. No one answered. No one paid attention. With the God of Israel, however, everything is different. The idols do not speak. The Lord God of Israel does. The idols are seen but not heard. God is heard but not seen.

But what if God had not spoken? What if we had not received this word? If God had not spoken, we might have a religion school. It might be that human beings, just in the blindness of trying to figure things out, would come to some sense of transcendence, and perhaps even be able to make some kind of argument from design. And certainly, human beings, possessing some ingenuity and intelligence, would be pondering these things.

Of course, we need not speak hypothetically about this. We see it. All you have to do is listen to the cultural chatter, and you hear the kind of conversation that would take place if God had not spoken. Go to some divinity schools, some theological seminaries, some universities in the academic world, and you will see the kind of discourse and the kind of teaching and the kind of philosophy and worldview that would emerge if God had not spoken.

What if this really is a game that we are playing, each using whatever language game is convenient and handy in terms of our social and cultural and linguistic system? What if this really is something of a smorgasbord of worldviews in which we can just kind of put it all together as we see fit? If God has not spoken, then there is no end to that game. If God has not spoken, no one is right and no one is wrong. If God has not spoken, what you end up with is the end game of postmodernism – nihilism, no knowledge whatsoever.

But if God has spoken, everything is changed. If God has spoken, then the highest human aspiration must be to hear what the Creator has said. And though the revelation of God is not merely propositions, it is never less than that. It is personal. Hearing the voice of the Lord God is not merely to receive information, but to meet the living God. We are accustomed to speaking and singing of grace and mercy of God, and our redemption in the cross of Christ. But we must also speak of the mercy of God in revelation.

In the book of Deuteronomy, we meet the speaking God. "Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, and survived?" Mercy and grace meet here. This is, in its own way, a proto-gospel. Christopher Wright makes this comment concerning what happened at Sinai, saying what really mattered there was not that there had been a theophonic manifestation of God, but that there had been a verbal revelation of God's mind and will. Sinai was a cosmic audiovisual experience, but it was the audio that mattered. It is the audio that matters, for God has spoken.

If God has spoken, let me suggest several realities that should frame our thinking as Christians. **First**, if God has spoken, then we do know. And what we know is the highest and greatest knowledge any human ear can ever hear. No human ear deserves to hear God's voice, but by his grace, we hear it and we survive. But having heard it, we cannot feign ignorance. We cannot act as if we do not know. Francis Schaeffer, for instance, said that for the Christian who understands the doctrine of revelation, there is no real epistemological crisis. There is only a spiritual crisis. All that remains is whether we will obey.

Thus there is a firm basis to what we do here, because we know. We have an authority by which we preach, and an authority by which we teach. In every class, in every course, and in every church, what is spoken is spoken because we have heard. We are not making this up as we go along! And because we have heard, we cannot feign ignorance, and we are thus accountable for the hearing.

Secondly, if God has spoken, we know only by mercy. That is a good reminder for anyone who studies theology. There can be no pride in the knowledge of God, because everything we know about him, we know by mercy. Carl F. H. Henry describes this so beautifully when he speaks of revelation as God's willful disclosure, wherein he forfeits his own personal privacy so that his creatures might know him. We have no claim upon God. There is no necessity for him to forfeit his own personal privacy.

Moreover, there is no way, as the Bible makes clear over and over again, that we could ever figure him out on our own. He must speak, and he has. Dr. Henry said this in the second volume of *God, Revelation and Authority*: "If divine revelation in terms of speech means anything, it implies among other things that God need

Continued on page 16...

Intangible Things

Heidi VanderSlikke

What's in a name?

"Name?" said the man behind the counter.

"Vander*Slick*," I said, pronouncing it the Canadian way. He looked at me, pen poised over the worksheet. I began to spell, "V-A-N-D-E-R-S-L-I-K-K-E."

"Ah, *fun-der-slik-ka*," he said, with charming Dutch inflection.

"Sure," I said with a smile.

"That's how you say it," he continued.

"Right," I replied. But in my mind I thought, *that's how* you *say it, and maybe 99 per cent of the funderslikkas on the planet say it, but where I come from we say, "VanderSlick."*

This month I'm celebrating my 28th anniversary as Mrs. VanderSlikke. Over the years I've come to love that name more and more. Now I'll admit, being born with a heavy-duty German name (Brutscher), I had thought maybe I'd one day marry someone with a simple handle like Smith or Jones, something I wouldn't have to spell for the rest of my life. But along came Jacob Adrian VanderSlikke and all that went out the window.

I grew up in a town largely populated by VanderThis and VanderThat, but never paid much attention to which letters they capitalized. It seemed to vary from one family to another, so I assumed it was open to interpretation. As a starry-eyed bride in 1978, I simply copied my husband's practice of capitalizing the V, D and S.

That's how we listed it on our marriage certificate and in the phone book. It wasn't until I noticed my in-laws used only capital V and S that I asked Jack why he used an upper case D as well. The answer was simple. "Because I like writing the capital D," he said. "They're fun to make." I couldn't argue with that. But the question remained: To D, or not to D?

By this time we had all kinds of legal documents bearing the threefold capitals. Besides, my father always said that your signature should be as unique as you are, not to mention hard to forge. And I had perfected a rather stylish autograph, I thought. So I didn't see any reason to mess with a good thing. Our bank manager at the time (a Dutch lady), said we had the two most distinctive signatures of all her clientele, mine because it was so artistic, and Jack's because it was illegible except for the capitals.

When they came to Canada my in-laws decided to simplify the pronunciation, which made a great deal of sense. I learned to automatically spell the last syllable whenever I signed up for anything. If the person taking my information didn't ask about capitals, I was happy to let them do as they pleased. If they asked, "How many words is that?" I had to bite my tongue not to reply, "Surprise me." I remember going through the whole ordeal with a credit card representative, only to receive a card in the mail a week later made out for "Ja jck VanDerSlikke."

With a name like VanderSlikke, you expect variations. My mother-in-law's first name is Maria, but she goes by "Rie." One time she arrived at a women's conference and was handed a name tag for "Rip VanSikkle." Fortunately she has a great sense of humor and wore the badge proudly all day.

Despite the day to day challenges, the VanDerSlikkes of Harriston were content. That is, until my father-in-law brought home a history book from Holland. *Geslacht Van der Slikke* chronicles their genealogy from 1570 until 2003. Thumbing through pages of the names of kinfolk and ancestors, Jack noticed the name is most often written as three words, with only the S capitalized. "Maybe we should do that," he said one evening, obviously overcome with a sudden urge to get in touch with his roots.

"No!" I nearly shouted. "I mean, honey, the three capitals are part of who we are. We have 25 years of history as capital V, capital D, capital S VanDerSlikkes. We can't change that now." He reluctantly let go of the idea.

Jack browsed through the book, studying pictures and finding the names of relatives that he knows from Holland. He also found several Jacobs, a number of Adriaans, and even a couple of Jacob Adriaans. "They all have two a's in Adriaan. How come I only have one a? Where's my other a?" he asked his mom.

To which she replied, "I only gave you one 'a' because you were born in Canada and it's easier to spell that way. If you had two a's your name would constantly be misspelled." Smart cookie, that Rip VanSikkle.

That settled the matter until James and Willene's wedding last year. The minister was completing the marriage certificate and needed family information. He asked Jack his full name. "Jacob Adrian," he said, then added, "With two a's."

"No!" I interjected, "Only one 'a.'"

The minister raised his eyebrows and looked back and forth between the two of us. "Oh, all right," said Jack, "Just one 'a.'"

Names have meaning, especially Dutch names. As I understand it, "slikke" refers to the silty soil of a river bottom. According to a book I read years ago, "Heidi" means battle maiden. So that makes me the Battle Maiden from the Silt. Perfect.

Some people think that when you get to heaven Christ will assign each person a new name, one that accurately reflects who you are. Hmm. It's going to be tough to top Battle Maiden from the Silt. But as long as it's written in the Book of Life, I'll be okay.

Heidi VanderSlikke lives in Harriston, Ont. Her email: hmvanderslikke@ hotmail.com

How generous an orthodoxy?

Arie C. Leder

Scripture praises generosity in giving and sharing. It is characteristic of the righteous to be generous: they will prosper, good will come to them; they will be blessed declare the psalmist and the sage (Ps. 112:5; Prov. 11:25; 22:9). Lately, however, generosity has been applied to fundamental Christian belief (Brian McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*).

The term made its way into the *Banner* of July 2006 in a letter to the editor by a church planter who responded to the editor's "God First" editorial which he understands as a call for "theological uniformity." The subject of his response was "baby dedication." He writes: "In allowing baby dedications, emerging churches have chosen to exercise the principle of generous orthodoxy; that is, allowing freedom in relation to non-salvation issues. In the church I pastor, we preach and teach infant baptism but are willing to make room for people who practice their faith differently."

Confessional beliefs

Of course, people who worship in churches of the CRCNA are free to believe what they wish; we do not impose orthodoxy. Thus the CRCNA is generous to all who come to occupy a pew or a chair of a Sunday morning. Full membership, however, includes voluntary assent to the teachings the church has agreed upon as fundamental. We happen to call those fundamental beliefs confessional.

Infant baptism is among them. And, even though infant baptism is a confessional teaching, the church holds that it is not necessary for salvation. Our recent discussions of women in office included the synodical declaration that the issue at hand was not confessional. This made the compromise of 1995 possible. That compromise is a generous, if unsatisfactory, opportunity for churches within our denominational covenant, not individuals, to practice the faith differently. No such compromise is available on the matter of baptism, for infants of believers or adults. Baptism is about God's generosity, not the parents' nor the baptizand's.

Generosity elsewhere

First the Anglican/Episcopalian churches in Africa and now the Puerto Rican branch of the United Church of Christ has spoken prophetically against the its American "mother" church by formally dissolving its union with that body. It disagrees with the UCC's "liberal stance on sexuality issues, such as ordination of gay ministers, conducting same-gender union rites and endorsing legal gay marriages." (*Christian Century*, July 11, 2006). As in Africa so in Puerto Rico, the children are reminding the parents about clear biblical truth about human sexuality. In certain areas of life one ought not, may not be, generous.

Or maybe so. Richard John Neuhaus reports that gay activist Bill Dobbs is arguing that "a choice to be gay is a choice for promiscuity – he calls it 'sexual generosity' – in which 'every man is linked to every other man by at least the potential of being his lover.'" (*First Things* [October 2006], 76). Just generosity, no hetero-orthodoxy.

On August 17, 2006, the United Church of Canada adopted a resolution calling for "'a pro-investment strategy with companies which engage in ethically responsible business' in Israel and in Palestinian areas.'" (*Christian Century*, September 19, 2006). The council, reports *Christian Century*, " backed off a resolution calling for a 'selective, phased disinvestment' from Canadian and international companies involved in the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories after hearing from two rabbis with opposing stances and a church investment specialist.'"

How generous of them. Not generous enough, however, to consider having faithful Christians of differing political and social positions testify. It seems one must be generous with Christian orthodoxy but not with genuine and legitimate differences concerning Christian social and political responsibilities.

Gratefully orthodox

Every age challenges the church's straight and clear thinking (=orthodoxy) seeking to muddle its message. The contemporary challenge to orthodoxy resides in the value of the individual. No one else makes a decision for anyone else: "No God, no master" was a popular French slogan toward the end of the 18th century.

Well-meaning people of faith who disagree with the CRCNA's two-millennia long tradition of infant baptism are free to join communions who believe as they do. There they can be gratefully orthodox Baptists. And if the "golden handcuffs" of denominational funding for church-plants places too many constraints on adding members to new church plants, one can be generously orthodox outside the bonds of denominational commitments.

Palace in Mosul, Iraq

Iraqi kidnappers behead priest in Mosul

Barbara G. Baker

ISTANBUL (Compass Direct News) – Iraqi kidnappers who abducted a Syrian Orthodox priest three days ago left his beheaded corpse in an outlying suburb of the northern city of Mosul last night.

Father Boulos Iskander, 59, was snatched off a Mosul street on Monday afternoon, October 9 while searching for car parts at local mechanic shops.

The Muslim kidnappers telephoned the priest's oldest son soon afterwards, demanding $350,000 ransom from the family.

After negotiations in several more calls, the kidnappers gradually reduced their demands to $40,000 but added another stipulation: that the priest's church must publicly repudiate Pope Benedict XVI's remarks about Islam in his lecture in Germany last month.

The family managed to raise and pay the ransom, and the St. Ephram parish of the Syrian Orthodox Church placed 30 large signboards on walls around the city, distancing itself from the pontiff's comments. But then the telephone calls stopped.

Fr. Iskander's dismembered body was discovered October 11 at about 7 p.m. in the remote Tahrir City district, two kilometers (1.2 miles) from the center of Mosul. His arms and legs had been severed and arranged around his head, which rested on his chest. His remains were brought to a local hospital, which then notified his church.

A Syrian Orthodox clergyman present at Fr. Iskander's funeral service today told Compass that at least 500 members of the Mosul Christian community attended, many of them weeping profusely. "Many more wanted to come to the funeral," he said, "but they were afraid. We are in very bad circumstances now."

Ramadan atrocities

The deadly targeting of Iraqi's Christians has shot up since the beginning of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting now into its third week.

According to the Catholic Asia News agency, Islamist militants distributed flyers across Mosul after Pope Benedict's controversial lecture in Germany, demanding that the local Catholic clergy condemn the Pope's remarks about Islam. If they did not do so, the threats said, "Christians will be killed and churches burned down."

Underlining the warning against Mosul's Christian community, armed militants surrounded the local Chaldean Catholic Church of the Holy Spirit on September 24. The attackers fired at least 80 bullets at the church, damaging the eastern side of the building and shattering some windows. Although the attack came shortly after 11 a.m. on a Sunday morning, no services were in progress at the time and no injuries reported.

In Baghdad that same Sunday, two bombs that exploded near the Assyrian Orthodox Church of the Virgin Mary in Baghdad's central Al-Kerada district killed four civilians, including the church guard, and wounded 14 others. The initial explosion, set under the parish priest Ezaria Warda's car, was timed to go off as worshippers left Sunday mass, with a second car exploding a few minutes later.

Another armed attack was mounted in Mosul on October 2 against the convent of the Iraqi Dominican Sisters. No one was injured in the hail of bullets, although the convent's garden was set afire.

After two days, unknown militants returned to fire shots at Mosul's Church of the Holy Spirit on October 4, and again on October 5, injuring one of the guards.

According to sources inside Iraq, some of the Christian clergy have stopped wearing their clerical robes in public to avoid inciting attacks.

Iraq's young Christian women have also become open targets for insurgents plying the kidnapping industry over the past two weeks.

"In one case in Baghdad, the victim committed suicide after the ransom was paid and she was released because of the torture and sexual violence she suffered," Asia News reported yesterday. Another girl who was subjected to gang rape took her own life while still in her captors' hands.

Christian schooling in the Philippines: struggle and promise

John Van Dyk

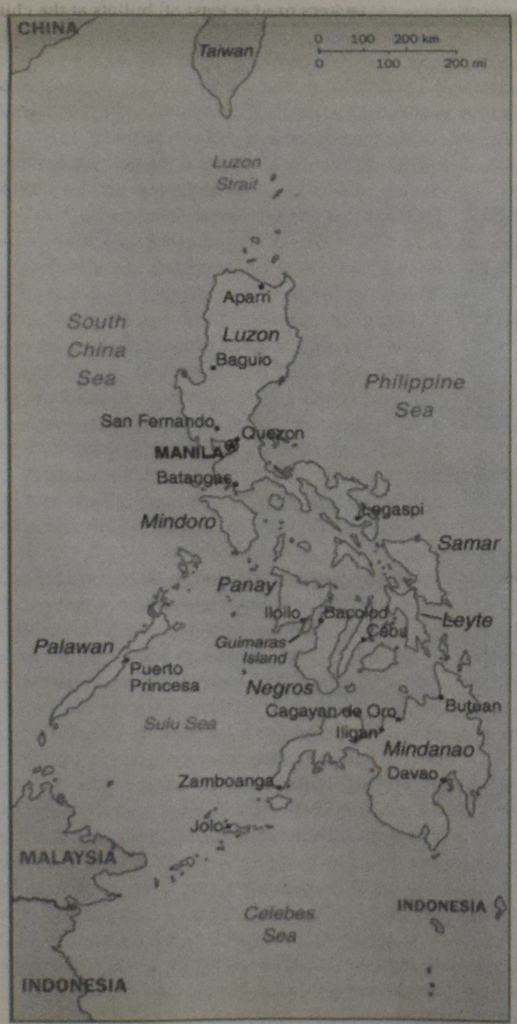
Nestled along the South China Sea just north of Indonesia lies a beautiful, lush tropical country called the Philippines. Comprising an archipelago of more than 7000 islands, the Philippines counts a population of approximately 88 million people, of whom 40 per cent live below the poverty line. As the airliner descends into the Manila sprawl, passengers looking out of the windows see shanties, huts, and slums pressing right up to the fences bordering the runways of the busy international airport.

The Philippines is indeed a poor country. It is not uncommon to see women and children, and old men too, scavenging about in the trash piles along the roads for something of value, or at least, something to eat. Four out of every ten Filipino children are undernourished. Poverty is one of the massive challenges facing the country, along with political tension, conflict between Muslims and Christians – especially in the southern parts of the southernmost island Mindenao – and natural disasters such as typhoons, cyclones, and volcanic eruptions. Relentless deforestation has contributed to mudslides and water problems. Heavy monsoon rains can aggravate the misery. Rising waters sometimes leave poverty-stricken areas flooded so that tenants in unprotected housing slosh about in several feet of fetid water for weeks or months at a time.

Given these challenges, Christian churches and Christian schools have their work cut out for them. In early September I returned to the Philippines for the third time in four years, once again for primarily educational purposes, and once again invited by an organization of Reformed Christian schools called Buklod Biyayang Kristiano – BBK for short. BBK is a Filipino acronym for "joined together in grace." Consequently, a number of these schools are called Grace Community Christian School.

These schools, offspring of churches of Reformed persuasion, exist primarily in the north (Luzon) and central parts (Visayas) of the country, although BBK is also active in Mindenao. There are other Christian schools as well in the Philippines. ACSI supports the efforts of the more evangelical-oriented schools, and does good work.

The BBK Christian schools present a sharp contrast to the public schools. The fact is, the public schools in the Philippines are in a perpetual state of crisis. The quality of public education is dismally low, classrooms are in short supply, and almost all of them are notoriously overcrowded. Most public school classrooms have 50 or more students per teacher. In the rural areas many of the poorest children have no access at all to any kind of meaningful formal education.



The BBK schools offer quality education, a caring environment, and a welcoming atmosphere. Most importantly, the education provided in these schools is Christian, an especially significant point since the great majority of students in these schools is non-Christian and comes from non-Christian families. For this reason the Christian schools in the Philippines cannot help but support a strong missionary outreach of the church. Christian schools, in fact, contribute significantly to church growth: through the education provided in the Christian school, children and parents come to know the Lord and are enfolded in the church.

Nevertheless, the BBK schools are not parochial schools. As soon as they are large enough, a school board typically separate from the church council is established. BBK honors the Kuyperian principle of sphere sovereignty.

The BBK schools, like all the others in the country, struggle. Money is a key problem. Christian schools must charge tuition in order to pay their teachers. Salaries are pathetically low: an average Christian school teacher earns less than $70 a month. Where does this salary come from? From tuition paid by parents, most of whom live in poverty themselves.

The temptation to send a child to the free public school is great, in spite of the low standards and crowded classrooms. Another problem is the lack of adequate resources and facilities. Currently curricular materials are borrowed from frequently incompatible organizations. Most important is the inadequate understanding of what Christian education if all about.

This latter reality prompted my visit. Two key objectives guided my work: (1) conduct seminars on the nature and practice of Christian education, and (2) serve as a consultant to a steering committee exploring the possibility of establishing a Christian teachers' college. Doing workshops with Filipino teachers is an extremely rewarding task.

Most of the teachers and principals have already become aware of the widespread and pernicious problem of dualism bamboozling Christian educators and parents into believing that all is well as long as a school offers Bible courses, chapel, and devotions at the beginning of the school day. The BBK schools, particularly, are wrestling with the question that confronts all Christian schools everywhere: How does our Christian faith relate to everything we do in the classroom, including the teaching of math, language and physical education? How does what we believe direct our management policies, our assessment and evaluation practices, and extracurricular activities? In short, how does the confession that Christ is king reverberate throughout the school? The BBK schools sense the problem, and are eager to gain insight.

A most promising development is the plan to establish a Christian teachers' college. BBK already owns a sizable plot of land, currently occupied by the Christian Reformed Bible College, the place where Filipino Christian Reformed pastors receive their training. The proposed college is essential if the BBK (and other) Christian schools are to flourish in the Philippines. In such a college, teachers can learn what Christian teaching is all about, how it equips students not only to become good heaven-bound church members, but redemptive agents ready to challenge the spirits of the age and setting out to make all things new in a society that cries out for healing.

The BBK schools have been intermittently supported by various North American-based organizations like Worldwide Christian Schools (USA), Christian Schools International, CRWRC, and Christian Reformed World Missions. At the moment, the need is critical.

Pictured are Pastor Leo and students at Grace Community Christian School in Pasay City, Metro Manila. Zeeland Christian School, MI, has had a unique relationship with Grace Community Christian School. It involves cross-cultural study and the support of almost 80 students at Grace Community Christian School.

What can we do? What can *you* do? I offer some suggestions. How about a "sponsor-a-teacher" or "adopt-a-teacher" program that helps pay teacher salaries so that tuition costs can be lowered resulting in sharp increases in enrollment? What about a funding project that permits creative teachers to come together in their long vacation (April and May) to construct more holistic curricular materials? Are you an experienced (semi-) retired educator looking for a change of pace? Consider volunteering to spend time in a BBK school walking alongside teachers, encouraging them, consulting with them, and helping write lesson and unit plans, as Henry and Angela Visscher from Edmonton did a number of years ago. Note that there is no language barrier in the Philippines: virtually all instruction is conducted in English.

Every time I leave the Philippines (or any other Third World country, for that matter), I cry a little. As the plane takes off and ascends towards wide open oceans, I leave poverty, misery, and struggle behind and head for a land overflowing with milk and money, a land filled with malls and saturated with advertising that urges us to buy more things we don't need; a land where materialism and self-service are king and queen. Good-bye poverty, hello affluence! A deep feeling of pain is unavoidable.

Christian schools such as those sponsored by BBK can play a key role in the effort to break the vicious cycle of poverty that ensnares millions of people. In these schools students learn skills of leadership, ability to take initiative, and an eagerness to address the evils that keep their societies in bondage. The Philippines is one place where the cycle can be broken. Already the Spirit is at work. Consider following Him. Support BBK, and, if you can, join them.

John Van Dyk is Director of the Dordt College Center for Educational Services and Professor of Philosophy of Education Emeritus.

Ecclesiastes

The foolishness of human folly

Ecclesiastes 10:3

Even as he walks along the road,
the fool lacks sense
and shows everyone how stupid he is. [NIV]

Even when a fool walks along the way,
He lacks wisdom,
And he shows everyone that he is a fool. [NKJ]

A. A. van Ruler

If everyone were wise, the world would have a future, and our lives would possess real meaning. Then our efforts would not be in vain but would produce worthwhile results.

This is, at any rate, the fundamental trust that each of us harbors: we believe that wisdom is genuinely wise, that if reality and the world conformed to the ways of wisdom, it would be good. Genuine wisdom would reveal the essence of being.

This is, however, already a matter of faith. Why should wisdom be genuinely wise? How can we know this for certain? What if reality simply does not accord with wisdom; suppose it is nothing more than an illusion?

Anyone who seriously grapples with this question quickly finds himself at the abyss of despair. If he gives in on even a single point, he will fall into it and be lost.

Those who believe in God will resolutely reject such thoughts. God is the Creator. He is wise and good, and therefore his creation, too, is wise and good. Only in this way can we truly hold that wisdom is both wise and good. But when it comes right down to it, this is all a matter of faith. But we live by this faith each and every day.

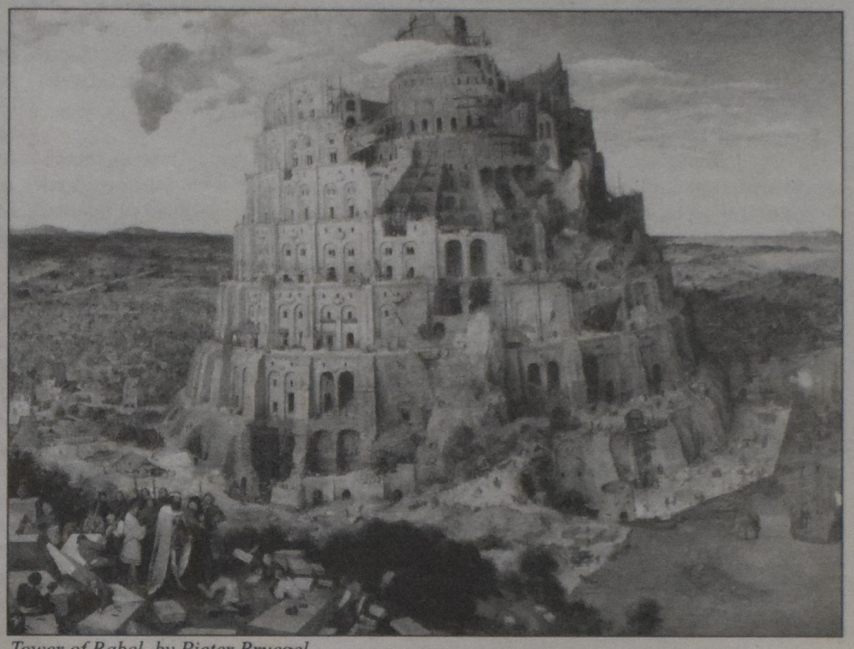
What is true of wisdom is also true of folly. In this passage the Preacher plumbs the foolishness of folly. He depicts it in a vivid image: Wherever the fool goes, he lacks wisdom, and he tells everyone that he is a fool. This is another way of saying that foolishness is foolishness no matter how you look at it. It sees nothing but foolishness and it reduces everything to foolishness. Just as the drunkard sees the whole world teetering – people, streets and homes – so the folly of foolishness is that it is always foolish and makes everything foolish.

This is really very remarkable. Foolishness is already a very remarkable thing, and so is the foolishness of foolishness, that is, the fact that foolishness is indeed foolish. Remarkable, too, is the fact that there is such a thing as foolishness – that it is possible to be foolish. A star, for example, cannot be overcome by folly. Nor can plants and animals. But we humans can succumb to folly.

But the most foolish thing about folly is that we are forced to ask the question whether it is really true: Is foolishness really foolish? Who will guarantee that wisdom isn't foolish or that foolishness isn't wise? Every fool, after all, claims as much. We reply by saying that this is precisely why he is a fool. But he, of course, maintains that he is the epitome of wisdom.

In this way, folly infects everything it touches. We can get past this only by making a resolute choice, but it is a choice of faith.

Thus far we have dealt with foolishness and the foolishness of folly, but now we come to something even more serious: that a living individual can become a fool. A fool participates in foolishness. He becomes ensnared in it and is ruled by it. No matter where he goes, he lacks any sense. He does go his own way, of course, for he remains a living human being. He travels the earth. He follows a way, a way across the earth and through time. With his words, thoughts and judgments, he carves his way through the jungle of being. Like everyone else, he is an acting human being; he does things. But no matter what he does or says, it lacks any sense. Where did it go? It is simply gone – nowhere to be found. His judgments, his thoughts, his words, his actions – they are all foolish. This is why wherever he goes he veers to the left (10:2), that is, to the wrong, toward disaster and destruction.



Tower of Babel, by Pieter Bruegel

His folly is visible. All who meet him wherever he goes, even complete strangers, immediately see that he is a fool. This, too, is remarkable: in a world of fools, the fool is nevertheless immediately recognized as a fool.

Although the world is wicked, wickedness remains wicked; evil, evil; and foolishness, foolish. It is in no way wise or good, and this is tangible. The good and the wise overpower everything, including wickedness and folly. The good alone is good. The wise alone is wise. This is due to being, which is created by God, and this is why it is wise and good. God's wisdom and goodness shine through everything with an irresistible force, reaching into the heart and actions of mankind.

This explains the great mystery that even in our darkened existence we can still discern the darkness as darkness. How can a blind man detect a black cat in a dark room? Sometimes it seems as though we are blind and the world is such a dark room and that truth and goodness are black cats. Nevertheless, when you meet a fool, everyone immediately sees he is a fool. It's unmistakable: foolishness is indeed foolish.

Or should we read the phrase, "He shows everyone that he is a fool" differently? Perhaps it doesn't mean that by his conduct he shows everyone that he is a fool, but that he tells everyone he meets, "You are a fool"? This is also true: the fool thinks himself to be wise and everyone else a fool. That is part of his folly.

However we read it, the one is as bad as the other. Foolishness is so foolish that it is immediately recognizable for what it is. The fool is so foolish that he declares all wisdom to be folly. It is a dreadful thing: that we can be such fools; that we can deface and spoil large portions of our lives and of our hearts by our foolishness; that there is such folly in the world; and that it has the power to undermine wisdom.

This too strikes us: that in this world foolishness often counts for more than wisdom. This is the point the Preacher wants to make. "As dead flies give perfume a bad smell," he says, "so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor" (10:1). The world and human life are more often ruled and structured by folly rather than by wisdom. This is why we see so little in the way of results, why the world produces so little that is worthwhile. This is the vanity and futility of human labor under the sun.

The Fool, by Erich Heckel

Media/Consumers

Prepackaged conversion and the Dr. Phil Show

R. Danielle Egan and Stephen Papson

One aspect of the pervasive "religiosecular" character of American culture is the marriage of capitalism and conversion experiences, particularly in "self-help" television. Psychologist cum life coach Phil McGraw, who got his start on *Oprah*, hosts the talk television program *The Dr. Phil Show*. Airing on 210 television stations, with an average audience of 7 million, it regularly ranks among the top ten household shows across America. With a contract good through the 2013-2014 season, Dr. Phil shows no sign of slowing down.

We suggest that while Dr. Phil rarely refers to religion directly, the predominant structure undergirding his show is quasireligious in nature and mimics the conversion experience.

"Today I'm talking to addicts," Dr. Phil announces, introducing an episode with his characteristic show of concern. Following a commercial break, viewers meet Joann, whose downcast face projects shame and desperation. Flanked by her husband and Dr. Phil, Joann begins her confession in a pre-taped montage: "I'm running out of pills .... I wrote to Dr. Phil because I felt that it was my last hope. I began taking Vicadin in May 2000 .... I don't have any self esteem – some days I think this is how I'm going to die. Dr. Phil, how can I kick this habit and stay alive for the sake of my family?"

Joann is searching for salvation, and according to Dr. Phil, he is just the one to help her find it. Indeed, the structure of a typical episode is comparable to that of many religious conversion experiences: A person in need of help confesses, is forgiven, accepted into a community, and goes on to testify to his or her redemption. Dr. Phil receives the confession, offering advice and admonition, and ultimately granting forgiveness and welcoming the person into a new life changed for the better – relieved of drug addiction, marital tensions, excess weight, etc. Participants often appear in later shows to testify to their transformations back to normalcy, further attesting to the effectiveness and pervasiveness of their changes.

Within this highly commodified entertainment spectacle, Dr. Phil, who rarely mentions religion explicitly, both reproduces and exploits certain social functions of religion. Individual episodes generally develop according to an easily reproducible pattern for eliciting "conversion" experiences.

This happens in three ways. First, Dr. Phil generates an aura of moral authority. His "tell it like is" and "get real" style creates a clear binary of good and evil, right and wrong. Drawing heavily on a rational-utilitarian discourse, he speaks with authority and a tone of certainty, mapping clear paths back to normalcy for participants.

Second, he produces a sense of empowerment in those whom he counsels, through participation in his moral authority. Within the structure of the confession, his predominantly female participants gain the sense of having a "voice." They share their stories – of painful addictions, the anguish of bad relationships, and the shame they feel over being unable to control their weight – with someone who listens and promises concrete help.

Echoing Nike's effective "Just do it" slogan, Dr. Phil's advice is simple: Just change your life. And though everyday life does not often bend to such a simple edict, Dr. Phil nevertheless constructs an arena in which a sense of personal agency is able to emerge and flourish.

Third, Dr. Phil creates a sense of community. Organized around a television show, a website (www.drphil.com), and listserves, this largely virtual but remarkably coherent community galvanizes its members to the end of resisting some of the symptoms of contemporary secularization: anomie, privatization, cultural fragmentation, and moral uncertainty.

This quasireligious structure is foundational to the Dr. Phil empire and its incredible prosperity. Phil McGraw's success extends far beyond that of the television show alone; he has a profitable lecture circuit, a webpage, a forum for giving advice on Match.com, and has authored five No. 1 New York Times bestsellers as well as several workbooks. His method resonates widely, generating concomitant profit.

Yet Dr. Phil is not a force of "secularization" in any simple way; in fact, he offers remedies to the problems of secularization precisely through a kind of resacralization – albeit in a highly commodified form. He does not seek to replace religion (many among his audience are members of religious communities, primarily Judeo-Christian), but instead performs many of the same social functions that religion does – communicating moral authority, providing a sense of meaning within the vicissitudes of everyday life, and establishing a stable and supportive (virtual) community.

The Dr. Phil Show thus appropriates religious structures and functions toward capitalist ends. While an entertainment spectacle driven by audience ratings may not appear to constitute the sacred, in this case, the line separating the religious and the secular is certainly far from clear.

References: For a more detailed discussion of conversion in the Dr. Phil Show, see the earlier article by the same authors, "'You Either Get It or You Don't': Conversion Experiences and The Dr. Phil Show," Journal of Religion and Popular Culture, *vol. 10, (Summer 2005), http://www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/articles10.html.*

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This article was originally published on Sightings, *a website of the Martin Marty Center at the University of Chicago Divinity School.*

Big surprises weighing Thanksgiving turkeys

I wanted to know how much waste there is in an average size turkey. How many pounds of meat, how many pounds of bones and waste? I read somewhere that a turkey has 157 bones.

Many turkeys and chicken breasts are cooked at the restaurant I run. We never use processed meat. Turkey meat is always popular in our special hot dishes and club sandwiches. People love turkey dinners with mashed potatoes, buns, thick gravy, cranberries, bowls filled with caesar salad, vegetables, lemon and apple pies and cakes – all prepared in our kitchen.

The week before Thanksgiving Day we cooked up seven turkeys for two dinners – a 50th wedding anniversary celebration dinner for 36 people and for a group of 43 people from a local business. Both groups wanted turkey and the works. And did people ever eat – many coming for second helpings and especially for caesar salad.

I was curious to see how much waste there is in a turkey. The only way to gather that information is to cook a turkey and separate the meat from the bones and skin and weigh them both. That's what I did and was I ever surprised. Not only did all the waste surprise me, but the turkey was one kg lighter than what the tag said.

The turkey I used for my experiment was one of two turkeys I had bought at a family-run independent supermarket. The price tag said the bird weighed 13.4 pounds (converted to pounds). I assumed that to be correct when I marked down the weight. Why would I think otherwise?

When I de-boned the bird I had 3.75 pounds of bones and skin and 4.25 pounds of meat. The neck weighed eight ounces, the liver and heart seven ounces. So that was nine pounds of meat and waste. But the turkey was 13.4 pounds. What happened to the other 4.4 pounds? I can see losing a little weight when the bird is cooking. But 4.4 pounds of turkey disappearing during the cooking process made me suspicious.

I went to the freezer and weighed the other similar size turkey. The tag said the bird weighed 6.6 kg.

My scale said otherwise – 5.6 kg.

I had numerous smaller size turkeys in the freezer that were bought at another supermarket. I weighed them. They weighed exactly what the tag said they did.

That meant only one thing. The family-run supermarket was marking the wrong weight on their turkeys – and for their gain. Stores aren't that stupid to intentionally mark wrong weights on their products – especially turkeys. They can be fined heavily if they are caught cheating.

I called the store and spoke to a man in the meat department. I told him my findings. He didn't dispute that it could happen. He blamed it on "the kids putting the wrong weigh tags on the turkeys."

They gave me a ten-dollar refund on five more turkeys I bought. Yes, I weighed them.

Turkey talk

Speaking of turkeys, what do you think is the top turkey-eating country in the world?

The United States is by far the largest turkey producing country in the world. But not the top turkey-eating country. U.S. turkey production dropped off by three per cent in 2005 over the previous year but growers plan to do much better this year.

The latest USDA report shows there were 256 million birds raised during 2005. Minnesota continues to be the number one turkey production state, with 44.5 million, followed by North Carolina with 36.0 million, Arkansas with 29.0 million, and Virginia with 21.0 million.

Canada, by comparison, is the eighth largest producer of turkeys in the world at 19.6 million a year. The tiny country of Israel produces almost as many turkeys as Canada does.

In 2004, Canada imported 8.9 million kg, an increase of 28 per cent over 2003. Most of the increase came in as boneless breast meat. All turkey meat imported originated from the U.S. These imports were valued at 32.6 million.

Ontario is by far the top turkey-producing province in Canada – more than double that of Quebec. 10.2 million whole turkeys are consumed annually in Canada.

More than half of the turkeys consumed annually in Canada are eaten on Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Canadians eat about 4.2 kg of turkey per person on average. In the U.S. it's 8 kg/pp. France: 6.6 kg/pp. Italy: 5.6 kg/pp. Germany: 5 kg/pp. United Kingdom: 4.2 kg/pp.

The top turkey-eating country in the world is Israel at 13.2 kg/per person.

Hope you had a Blessed Thanksgiving.

Maynard van der Galien owns and operates The Old Towne Hall Restaurant and Tea Room in downtown Renfrew, Ontario.

Has any people heard the voice of God ....continued from p.11

The Giving of the law upon Mount Sinai

And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. Exodus 19:16

not have thus disclosed himself. God might indeed have remained silent and incommunicative in relation to his creatures. His revelational speech to mankind is not an inescapable or inevitable reality. It is instead a demonstration of his own character.

It is not to be likened to the mathematically quite predictable spurting of the geyser Old Faithful. Instead, like an enigmatic weather pattern, his performance cannot be charted in advance and in crucial ways. It is once for all rather than merely sporadic. Even God's extended and ongoing speech in general or universal revelation is moment by moment, precept by precept, a matter of voluntary divine engagement and addressed to mankind that carries ever and on the utmost urgency." God mercifully lets his people hear. It is all by mercy, and thus intellectual pride is the enemy of any true theological knowledge. There is nothing we can figure out. There is nothing we can discover. There is no "aha" moment where, in some theological laboratory, a new element is discovered. We know by grace and mercy.

Third, if God has spoken, then we too must speak. We preach and teach and speak, because God has spoken. Because God has spoken, we dare not remain silent. There is a task here; there is an urgency here. And so we teach and we preach and we speak, because we are to be the speaking people of a speaking God. The people of God are not to be marked by their silence, but by their speech. There is a command here to preach, of course, and a command here to teach. In Deuteronomy six, Israel is reminded of the responsibility of parents to teach children. Throughout the very fabric of Scripture, the teaching mandate is a constant. And of course, for the church, it is just as clear. As Paul writes in 2 Timothy chapter four, *kerusso ton logon*, preach the word! We are not just to have heard it, but we are to teach it and to preach it and to share it.

The importance of this was made clear even in the Old Testament. In Nehemiah eight, for example, Ezra and his colleagues read the text aloud and then explained its meaning to the congregation. So we are to set it out and make it plain, because if God has spoken, we too must speak.

Fourth, if God has spoken, then it is all about God, and it is all for our good. You see, God does speak words of judgment in the Scripture, and God does speak words of warning. There are hard words in Scripture, but it is all for our good! God spoke words of warning to Israel in order that Israel might hear the warnings and obey the word, and not suffer the inevitable consequences of disobedience. Every single word of Scripture is for our good. That is why, even in this chapter of Deuteronomy, we are told that no one should add to these words, nor take away from them. Every word is for your good, like medicine for the soul, or food for the body.

Fifth, if God has spoken, it is for our redemption. When we think of the work of God in our salvation, we focus of course in the culmination and the fulfillment of God's saving work in the accomplished work of Christ on the cross. But to read the Scripture is to understand that God has been a redeeming, saving God from the very beginning. Taking Israel out of Egypt was redemption. Keeping Israel alive, even in the wilderness, was redemption. Speaking to Israel and letting Israel hear and survive was redemption.

Jonathan Edwards well understood this. Speaking of this passage, he says, "This was quite a new thing that God did towards this great work of redemption. God had never done anything like it before. 'Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire and live? Or has God assayed to go and take Him a nation that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt?' This was a great advancement of the work of redemption that had been begun and carried out from the fall of man. It was a great step taken in divine providence towards a preparation for Christ's coming in the world, in working out His great and eternal redemption. For this was the people from whom Christ was to come, and now we see how that plant flourished that God had planted in Abraham." God allowing Israel at Horeb, and thereafter, to hear and to survive, was a part of His work of redemption, and revelation is for our redemption.

We need to remember that. So often, even evangelical Christians speak of revelation as if it were something that witnesses to redemption. Yet we must keep in mind that revelation, in and of itself, is also a part of God's work of redemption. For without revelation, we would not know. We would have no clue. But by God's gracious revelation of himself, we do know.

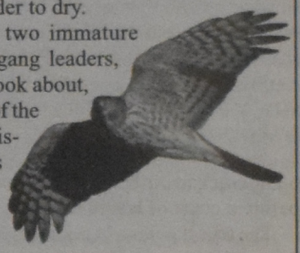
Trouble in the neighborhood

Curt Gesch

It isn't exactly high drama, but it has its moments.
The actors are beasts and birds.
The set is our front yard.
The cameraman is my wife Betsey. This is what she saw.

A squirrel is busy grabbing sunflower seeds, running to the side of the yard, and burying them in one of his middens. Two juncos peacefully forage underneath the feeder as well. A song sparrow and an immature white-crowned sparrow make occasional visits for a snack.

The squirrel runs to the poplar forest, cuts a mushroom and brings it back to the hanging bird feeder where he lays it down with about 34 other pieces of mushroom in order to dry.



Into this peaceful scene come two immature sharp-shinned hawks. Like street-gang leaders, they land on the top of the feeder, look about, and generally destroy the harmony of the yard. The juncoes and sparrows disappear quickly. The squirrel keeps his distance, not knowing if the sharp-shinned will really attempt an attack on him.

Squirrel (for that is his name) sits on a branch. He jerks spasmodically and chirps. He *chirrs*. He darts this way and that. He comes down the trunk, watching the hawks and scolding. It seems a standoff until something tips the balance: a magpie.

Bigger than the hawks, and certainly bolder, if not more arrogant, the magpie squawks and screeks until the hawks fly off. The magpie gets a drink at the bird feeder, presumably checking his handsome reflection, an occasionally peers over his shoulder, either looking for a hawk or admiring his own tail. He flies to the dog's dish and brings back some pieces of dog food and caches them in one of the bird feeders.

A Steller's jay jolts to a landing on that feeder and gulps down a piece of dog food. This is too much for Squirrel. He races to the feeder and attacks. The jay is too fast, but doesn't fly far; just a quick jump and a flutter, and then a landing on the rail fence. Squirrel resumes the attack. The jay teases Squirrel, staying just out of reach of rodent incisors.

Finally the jay flies off, and Squirrel continues his mad dash and bury activities. Juncoes and sparrows return.

And a cat (named Cat) watches with hungry, squinting eyes from the windowsill, resenting his incarceration during daylight hours.

This is what Betsey saw. I was at school teaching science.

Eritrea: Appalling religious situation continues to deteriorate

Elizabeth Kendal.

Recent reports from Compass Direct (CD) indicate that the appalling religious situation in Eritrea continues to deteriorate.

CD reports: "Newly compiled statistics smuggled out of Eritrea indicate that at least 1,918 Eritrean citizens are imprisoned and being subjected to torture and forced labor because of their religious beliefs.

"According to a detailed list obtained by Compass last month, 95 percent of these known religious prisoners of conscience are Christians.

"A total of 35 pastors, priests and church elders are confirmed under arrest in Asmara's Wongel Mermera investigation center. An additional 1,758 Christians of both evangelical Protestant and Orthodox confessions are jailed in 14 other cities and towns.

"According to reports compiled by Compass, 163 of these Christian prisoners have been put under arrest since the beginning of 2006. As many as a fourth of all those jailed are believed to have been incarcerated for two years or more."

According to CD, 69 Muslims are imprisoned for opposing the government-appointed mufti, and 27 Jehovah's Witnesses are imprisoned because of their conscientious objections to compulsory military conscription.

"None of those imprisoned for their religious beliefs in the government crackdown begun more than four years ago have been brought before a court of law to be charged or tried," reports CD.

The report gives a breakdown of the numbers of Christians in various prison facilities. It also details the tragic fate of those who attempt to escape from these facilities into the surrounding desert.

The persecution has spread way beyond those Protestant churches initially targeted in May 2002. The Eritrean Orthodox Patriarch Abune Antonios, who was deposed and replaced by the government in January, remains under house arrest. Subsequently, "Since March, 65 leaders of the Medhane Alem renewal movement within the Eritrean Orthodox Church have been openly threatened with excommunication if they refuse to confess following 'heretical' teachings."

Asmara's Anglican Church is also facing repression. CD reports, "The Department of Religious Affairs has refused to allow the Anglican Church in Asmara to supply its own pulpit since October 2005, when the Rev. Nelson Fernandez was summarily ordered out of the country. To the 'expressed dismay' of the Anglican congregation, one source said, control of the worship and activities of the church has been handed over to the government-registered Lutheran Church.

"Reports are circulating in Asmara that the government plans to shut down the Anglican Elementary School in the near future."

According to another CD report: "The Eritrean government demanded this month that the Kale Hiwot Church surrender all its property and physical assets to the government.

"The written confiscation order targets possessions of the Protestant church's relief department, which has for more than 20 years functioned as a legally recognized non-governmental organization (NGO) under the Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Commission."

CD adds that the sweeping property confiscation would include all church buildings, schools, vehicles and other assets. The church's computers, office equipment, files and keys to the property were confiscated in raids last October. The government action not only affects the church, but the orphanage and kindergartens run by the Kale Hiwot Church.

Patriarch Abune Antonios

Eritrean Christians have told CD that they believe that a strategic persecution is being executed in three stages:

1) the arrest of pastors and leaders (leaving the congregations leaderless),
2) the raiding and sealing of church places of worship (leaving leaderless congregations destitute and without facilities),
3) the permanent confiscation of church properties and assets (supposedly bringing an end to the church's existence).

"'All the closed churches here are undergoing a great deal of hardship and challenge to exist,' one source stated. But despite ongoing arrests and surveillance, local evangelicals told Compass they were 'continuing to meet for worship, prayer and Bible studies' in their homes. 'Please pray for God's protection, especially when we meet for prayer,' one said. 'All the churches are in a desperate need of Bibles for their ministries.'"

Eritrea has no independent media. Free Christians and human rights monitors leak this information at great personal risk. The government of Isaias Afewerki continues to deny that any religious persecution exists. Doubtless exacerbating the situation are the escalating tensions between Eritrea and Ethiopia (Coptic Orthodox Christian), over their border dispute and over Somalia.

Elizabeth Kendal is the Principal Researcher and Writer for the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty News & Analysis.

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

Unconscious childhood messages

All of us should strive to learn what we are running from, and to, and why.

James Thurber

The call about the impending baby came early in the evening giving us enough time to catch the last ferry of the day. Effortlessly, the vessel sailed across the Strait as the moon's rays shimmered over the quiet but dark waters. I felt blessed being able to pick up and go to experience the first flush of new birth at the dawn of a new day. I also felt blessed knowing our son and daughter-in-law very much wanted this soon to be born baby girl. At the same time I could not help but think of the many children being neglected, not wanted or abandoned.

Throughout the trip my thoughts turned to Liz who was the fourth girl in her family. She came for therapy when she was thirty-five. She was married and had three children. She talked about an overwhelming inner drive to make a difference in the world and about always getting involved in worthy causes. She would have lots of energy as she worked towards some goal, which would feel strong and right. Yet at the end, there was always a big letdown when the goal was reached or the event was over leaving her once more with the urgency to find another since she could not tolerate the empty feelings she experienced.

In therapy, Liz recalled how her father had frequently reminded her of how much he wanted a son instead of another daughter. She also recalled how her birth became a family story couched in humor and irony. And she recalled how four years after her birth the much-desired boy was finally born and how her father lavished his attention on his son leaving her feel isolated and worthless. Furthermore, she related how her mother frequently moaned about the burden her five children were to her and all that she could have done with her life had she not had such a large family.

Over time Liz began to talk about how unworthy she felt in her family and how devastated she was when her mother said, "Don't get any ideas about being special…you're just the fourth kid in this family." She also talked about how much she needed to feel important and to believe she was doing something worthwhile in order to think she *was* worthwhile. She eventually recognized her need to make a difference in the world came from her fear of *being* worthless.

Also over time she began to see herself as a multi-talented person who tried to cover up her feelings of worthlessness by doing more and more. Eventually, she learned to identify the empty or depressed feelings within herself and began to recognize she had to feel this 'wound of worthlessness' so that she could make healthier choices about using her gifts for God's creation out of gratitude. This was a major breakthrough for Liz.

All of this went through my mind as we traveled during the night and early morning hours realizing full well this soon to be born child would also have her issues because no parent is perfect. And while Liz's basic fear in life was a sense of worthlessness others may have a fear of making mistakes, a fear of not having needs met, a fear of not allowed to be happy, a fear of not being comfortable in this world, a fear of not trusting oneself, a fear of not being dependent on others, a fear of not being vulnerable, or a fear of not being assertive.

At the same time, I believe it is more helpful to stress to parents the *positive* messages children need so they can grow and contribute to society in healthy ways. Some of these are: you are wanted, you are loved for yourself, you are seen for who you are, your needs are not a problem, you are safe in this family, you will be taken care of, you will not be betrayed and your presence matters. All of these messages will allow a child to be well equipped to meet the challenges of her or his life in the twenty-first century.

Such is my hope and prayer for Camryn Van Hove, born 1 a.m. on October 4th, 2006. May God always keep you within his care.

Arlene Van Hove is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC. She can be reached at avanhove@shaw.ca

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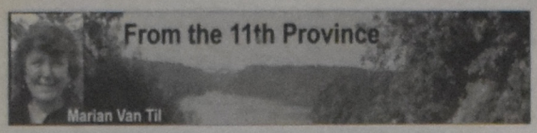
Reflections



'Then you will know that I am the LORD'

Faith is a fickle thing. Or so the mainstream media seems fond of assuming. The natural, even normal, response to experiencing tragedy, they seem to think, is to lose one's faith. Or at least to seriously question it. And if one questions faith, and one's own faith, one questions God: What kind of God is he really? (compassionless, judgmental); and does he actually exists at all? (no: such a god doesn't meet the criteria for "God"). In the midst of catastrophe many God-doubters become God-scoffers, and eventually God-denyers.

The deeper the tragedy, the greater the tendency to put God in the dock. That's a common reaction in our day. Even those of us who call God our Father and Jesus our Savior tend to do it. We want explanations for things; and we particularly feel we deserve an answer as to why this illness, pain, grief or calamity is afflicting *us,* as individuals and communities – and perhaps even as nations. God becomes the defendant who must account for his actions – or absence – in the face of human suffering.

Yet we who know God as our Savior are able to come to terms with such situations and events when we throw ourselves on his mercy; we know he promises never to leave or forsake us (no matter how much it may look like he has). In the midst of disaster – personal or national – we must cling as fiercely as ever to the God of the universe who in *all things* works for the good of those who love him (Rom. 8:28).

But many unbelievers (and nominal Christians) join those who journalistically report the human toll of tsunamis, earthquakes, wars, famines, terrorist attacks, gangland murders and school shootings in concluding that God has a lot to answer for. Reporters and documentary makers seldom interview people whose spiritual foundations are built on the Rock which terrorists cannot topple. They're boring, perhaps. When we do get glimpses of committed Christians in dire situations, any faith-full comments are usually expunged from subsequent airings of a story.

A god in our own image

I saw a prime example of this while watching a PBS documentary last month on the fifth anniversary of 9/11. The documentary purported to look at how faith was operating in New Yorkers in their experiencing of the falling of the Twin Towers. Either the filmmaker didn't look very far or we're to surmise that there are no Job-like believers who are bearing their crosses and following Christ in that city of eight million souls.

There were two skeptical rabbis, the atheist former head of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, several educated agnostics, and a couple of people who said they indeed did "lose their faith" because God had stood by and done nothing, allowing "innocent" people (in their own families) to die. The documentarian also spoke with two Catholic priests, one a Monsignor whose new-ageish rambling about Providence (or lack thereof) was remarkable only for its evidence of skewed faith. The other priest did much better. In a discussion of evil, he asserted that evil does indeed exists (some interviewees inexplicably doubted it), and not as a nebulous force but personified in Satan and his minions, as Jesus himself frequently warns. But that second priest wasn't given much air time, so we weren't privy to other insights he might have had.

There was only one interviewee, a lapsed Catholic firefighter who lost two of his own firefighting sons in the conflagration, who said he had begun to attend church again and was taking God much more seriously. (But he too wasn't allowed to explain himself to any degree.) The majority of interviewees blamed God in one way or another (if they believed in God) for the events of 9/11 because he could have averted the destruction and didn't.

Two things began to become obvious about the attitudes expressed. First, an unspoken but deep-seated assumption that we human beings know the mind of God and can remake him in our own image. God should be what we want him to be, and act as we think he should. When he doesn't, we think nothing of passing judgement on him – though we recoil from the thought that God is justified in judging us, and much more, that his judgments are always just.

Second, the interviewees all spoke as if the 9/11 events were the worst disaster in human history simply because it touched *them*. I understand, of course, that when tragedy hits home and when death comes to one's family or friends, especially in such horrific fashion, it is a far, far different thing that watching from the sidelines or on television. Yet these reactions struck me as entirely self-absorbed. Time had passed when these interviews took place and there seemed to have been little attempt over those months by the interviewees who suffered direct loss to gain perspective on their situation, perspective which would be part of healing. Some of them seemed to relish railing at God because they had become victims; surviving victims, but victims nonetheless. They refused to cry out to God for healing and comfort.

Astonishing evidence of God as LORD

That brings me to the response God expects of us when he allows or sends disaster. The book of Ezekiel directly speaks to this (as do other parts of Scripture), and quite remarkably by modern standards. Every time God judges either the Israelites for their ongoing sin or the pagan nations for their ongoing denial of him, he concludes the description of the disaster he brings about with these words, "Then they will know that I am the LORD." This refrain echos again and again. Rather than evidence that God is absent or non-existent, he intends those who experience such calamities to see them as signs that he, indeed *is* God the LORD.

God's judgements on pervasive sin – in the form of invading armies, drought, earthquakes, floods – were probably not experienced much differently by the people in the path of those biblical disasters as people experience such things today. With a major exception. We are loathe to acknowledge God having a hand in any of it.

It was not always so that people were loathe to see God's hand in disasters, and to repent because of it. Only in our modern age (since probably some time in the 19th century) has humankind (or at least, humankind in Western civilization) come to collectively sneer at such a "primitive" thought.

It's true of course that we must be very careful *how* we speak of God's judgement. God judged Israel and the pagan nations not only as punishment, but to bring repentance. We can speak of his judgement today if we speak in the spirit (and Spirit) of his Word and are always ready to search our own hearts and put on our own sackcloth and ashes where needed.

The grandfather of one of the executed Amish schoolgirls told a Canadian reporter on the day it happened, "We are wondering what God is trying to tell us." Later that line was deleted from the report. I suspect that many viewers were dumbfounded, if not angered, by his attitude. This grandfather no doubt was voicing a common thought in his Amish community (and surely knows his community as no one outside it does). This tragic event caused him, first of all, to engage in what he saw as God-induced self-examination, not to blame God for what happened.

'We fall before thy glorious eyes'

I am also reminded of an event I read about while doing research on mid-18th century Britain. There was an earthquake in London on March 8, 1750, and another a month later on April 8. There was much apprehension among Londoners about a possible third one on May 8 (a Sunday, which many felt was significant). The earthquakes were taken quite seriously as signs of God's judgement on increasingly secular London, and as an opportunity to repent of those things that needed repenting of.

Sermons called people across Britain to self-examination and acknowledgement of sin. The great hymn writer Charles Wesley observed in his diary, "Such distress, perhaps, is not recorded to have happened before in this careless city." Soon after, he published *Hymns Occasion'd by the Earthquake*. In a stanza of one of those hymns he wrote: "Tremendous LORD of Earth and Skies,/Most holy, high, and just,/We fall before Thy glorious eyes,/And hide us in the Dust:/Thine Anger's long suspended Stroke/With deepest Awe we feel,/And tremble on, so lately shook/Over the Mouth of Hell."

Wesley's hymn texts in general are still sung across Christendom; there are 14 of them in the Christian Reformed Church's *Psalter Hymnal*. Yet I suspect that many of us may smile knowingly at such a view of earthquakes and other "natural disasters." We shouldn't. Eighteenth century Londoners still took seriously "... And then they will know that I am the LORD." And so must we.

I've written before about the judgement of God because it's a subject many of us no longer take half seriously enough, I think. That is a problem in that it indicates that we don't take *sin* seriously enough. We so easily forget how abhorrent our sin is to the God of whom angels cry aloud, "Holy, holy, holy, heaven and earth are full of your glory." In dismissing God's judgement of our human affairs we adopt the thinking of the secular West.

The Muslims who flew the planes into the World Trade Center took it upon themselves to be agents of God's judgement. It is not impossible that they were, but certainly not in the way they thought (it is God's, not ours, to avenge). In Scripture God frequently uses unbelievers to work out his purposes, the chief of which is to bring people to acknowledge that he is God, and in that acknowledging, to turn to him. Seeing God at work in the details of disaster is hard to fathom, and is downright repugnant to many people. Yet God *expects* us to see his hand in all that happens, and to recognize him there. *And then you will know that I am the LORD.*

The Way Out

Unlike the ancient Israelites and their pagan neighbors we live in the New Testament age.

Christ has come and has made propitiation for our sin. If we believe in him we will not suffer God's ultimate condemnation but glories beyond our comprehension. God's own glory and holiness have not changed. Sin is as repugnant to God as it ever was. Only now, the Way Out is clearly marked. We are free to begin to "glorify God and enjoy him forever," as the Westminster Confessions says if our "chief end."

Yet, on *this* earth, we still feel the pinch of God's disciplining hand. We are not exempt from suffering; nor, necessarily, will we escape some of the effects of judgements God sends as he causes the rise and fall of nations. But until the Day of his glorious appearing, in all that happens he assures us, "...Then you will know that I am the LORD."

Marian Van Til worked for CC from 1984-2000, and preceded Harry der Nederlanden as its editor. She now lives in Youngstown, NY; she may be contacted via e-mail at: mvantil@adelphia.net

Classifieds

Committee "Netherlands Bazaar"

Christmas Food Parcels

The Christmas season will soon be upon us and once again the Committee Netherlands Bazaar is depending on your co-operation to successfully identify those families who will receive a Christmas food parcel. If you know of any family of Dutch extraction in Ontario, in extreme financial circumstances, we need to hear from you before **Thursday, November 16th, 2006.**

Please note that we must have specific information in order to send the appropriate food parcel, such as name(s) of recipient(s), address, contact person, ages of children, as well as the reason for aid. Also the telephone number of a contact person who can verify this information and the signature of the contact person are required. **All submitted names will be kept in strict confidence.** We require confirmation of their current circumstance. If you have questions, please contact: Ge Spaans 905-477-1243, Jannie Thomas 416-498-8706, Anne Mol 905-713-1323, Greta Niemeyer 416-222-2087

Please forward information by November 16, 2006 to Mrs. G. Spaans, Committee "Netherlands Bazaar", 15 Pavilion Street, Unionville ON L3R 1N8. Your assistance in reaching these Ontario families in real need is very much appreciated. *Ge Spaans*

N.B.: The date of next year's Bazaar is September 29, 2007.

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Birthday

"Great is your Faithfulness O God my Father"
The DeBolster family wishes to congratulate

Rev. H.R. DeBolster

on the occasion of his **80th Birthday** on November 2, 2006.
Love: Coby
Geri & Marty – Michelle & Mike, Ryan & Sara
Bert & Jane – Stephanie & Scott & Mackenna, Robert, Rebecca, Derrick
Nel & Andy – Pete, Jeremy, Jennifer
Len & Elaine – Rachel, Steve, Alyson
Joanne & Jim –Teresa & Darryll, Tony, Jessica
Correspondence: 7 Bellstone Lane, Mount Hope ON L0R 1W0

Anniversaries

1951 Oct 29 2006

With praise and thanksgiving to God, we hope to celebrate the **55th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents and grandparents:

Dirk and Dien Van Kampen (Linker)

May God continue to bless you and keep you in his care.
With love from your children and grandchildren:
Janet & John Schinkel, *London, Ont.*
Chris, Jennifer, Elizabeth, Amanda
John & Jacqueline Van Kampen, *Spruce Grove, Alberta*
Jessica, Jason, Jeremy
Anita & Dean Hinchcliffe, *Corunna, Ont.*
Derek, Lindsay

Open House at Trillium Village, 400 Dominion St. Strathroy on Saturday October 28, 2006 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Home address: 115-400 Dominion St, Strathroy ON N7G 3C8

Anniversaries

Simcoe – October 20, 1956 - 2006

With joy and thanksgiving to God we wish to celebrate our parent's **50th Wedding Anniversary**

Henry and Lena Eising (nee **Hofland**)

Love from your children and grandchildren:
Judy Eising & Ron Groenenberg – Tim, Kate, *Guelph*
Sandy & Theo Brunsting – Terri, Matt, Joe, *Belleville*
Lisa & Eric Slofstra – Steven, Stephanie, *Simcoe*
Henry & Marjolein Eising – Aiden, Lucas, Emily, *Simcoe*

To celebrate we will have an **Open House** at their home Saturday October 21, 1 - 4 p.m.
(Followed by a family dinner.)
814 Cockshutt RR#5, Simcoe ON N3Y 4K4
519-4284607 eisinggh@simcom.on.ca
In lieu of presents our family would appreciate donations to the Canadian Food Grains Bank or CRWRC

Anniversaries

Groningen November 7 Willowdale
The Netherlands 1946 Ontario 2006

With joy and thanksgiving to God we wish to announce the **60th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents

Reinder and Netty (Zwaantje) Vanderboor
(nee **Hellinga**)

Congratulations and love from your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.
Tina & John Berkhuizen, *Willowdale, ON*
Ian & Shannon, Jennifer
Roely & Melanie Vanderboor, *London, ON*
Vincent, Neville & Nadege
Bill Vanderboor, *Richmond Hill,, ON*
Mark & Loren, Andrea (Nathaniel), Alan, Steven, Heather, Leanne
Rommie & Sonja Vanderboor, *Richmond Hill, ON*
Michael & Kristin (Zachary, Josiah), Andrew, Kevin, Chris
Marsha & Bob France
Matthew, Jason
Netty Ryan
Diana & Steve (Beth, Taylor), Paul & Monel (Kristin), Donna

We will celebrate at an **Open House** on Saturday Nov. 4, 3 – 5 p.m. at the Willowdale Christian School, 60 Hilda Ave. Willowdale

Correspondence: 240 Horsham Ave, Willowdale ON M2N 2A6

With thankfulness to God, we celebrate the **50th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents

John and Jean Vandenbrink

on October 21.

Congratulations from
Ed & Linda Kraay
Joanne Visser
Hank & Annette Vandenbrink
Marvin & Carolyn Jansen-Vandoorn
Paul & Renee Kastelein
Dwayne & Vikki Vandenbrink
16 grandchildren, 3 great-grandkids

Correspondence: 9033 -160 St, Surrey BC V4N 2X7

With joy and thankfulness to our Dear Lord, we hope to celebrate the **60th Wedding Anniversary** of our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents.

Robert and Ynske Eenling
(nee **Hoogeveen**)

We are thankful to the Lord for giving us such loving and wonderful parents, grandparents and great-grandparents and pray that he will continue to bless and keep them for us and each other.

With love from:

Children	*Grandchildren*	*Great-grandchildren*
George & Shirley Eenling	Nadine & Ron Masengi	Maya Masengi
Peter & Thea Eenling	Jason & Laura Eenling	Rae-Anna Masengi
Betty Stinson	Sarah Eenling	Gabrielle Masengi
Ken & Cathy Goring	Nicole Eenling	Noel Eenling
	Mary Stinson	Alexandra Eenling
	Katelyn Stinson	
	Jon Stinson	
	Pieter Stinson	
	Rory Goring	
	Tyler Goring	

To celebrate this event on Saturday, November 18th, we invite you to the **Open House** at 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Hebron Christian Reformed Church Whitby, Ontario
Best Wishes Only

Correspondence: 3385 Brock St N Whitby ON L1N 5R5

1956 October 12 2006

Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
We are thrilled to announced that

Peter and Kitty Rustenburg (nee **Veneman**)

along with family and friends, celebrated their **50th Wedding Anniversary** on October 12, 2006.

Thanks for your example of love and committment for each other. May God bless you both with many more happy years.
Love from your children and grandchildren

Correspondence address: 17 Pinewood Ave Grimsby ON L3M 1W2

Obituary

Groningen, the Netherlands Grimsby Ontario
January 26, 1910 September 12, 2006

Jan (John) Heeringa

was called home by his Lord and Savior, after a long and fruitful life.

John will be greatly missed by his beloved family:
His wife of 37 years;
Marie Stonehouse-Heeringa nee ten Hoor, *Grimsby*
His sons;
Jerry & Ria Heeringa, *Stoney Creek*
Casper & Fran Heeringa, *Dundas*
Jake & Karen Heeringa, *Puslinch*
Stepdaughter; Christina Stonehouse & Darcy, *Toronto*
His brother; Henry & Nettie Heeringa, *Brampton.*

There will be an empty spot in the lives of his many grandchildren, great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild, all who will deeply miss their dear Opa.

Predeceased by:
his wife of 31 years, Jeltje M. Heeringa nee Prins in 1966, his only daughter Tilly Werder nee Heeringa in 1986, his brother Jack Heering in Grimsby and five brothers in the Netherlands.

John's favorite Bible passage was Psalm 100 and especially verse 4a: *(I shall) Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise*, a wonderful reality for him now. In memory of John, donations may be made to Shalom Manor, where he received so much loving care.

Correspondence: M.M. Heeringa, M30 -12 Bartlett Ave Grimsby ON L3M 4N5

Obituaries

Charles T. Fennema 1929 - 2006

Thursday September 28, while praising God with hymns on the piano, our dear husband, father and grandfather, Charles T. Fennema, passed away.

Those who cherish his memory are his wife Netty Baart, children and grandchildren Hilda & John Buisman, Thea Fennema, Shirley & Gerald Velsink with Bradley and Alexandra, Ray & Jennifer Fennema with Sarah, Rachel, Joel, Aaron, Stephanie and Kaden, Norm & Irene Fennema with Kara and Cameron.

A service of celebration of Charles' life was held at Bethel CRC in Edmonton, AB on October 4, 2006.

Netty's address is 11339 - 66 St. Edmonton AB T5B 1H5

Psalm 103:17

Jacoba Meinema nee **Krottje**

Peacefully went home to her Lord and Savior on September 13, 2006 at Caressant Care in her 90th year.

Beloved wife of her late husband John (2003)
Loving mother of:
Elmer & Linda, *Listowel ON*
Clarence & Teena, *Innisfail AB*
John, *Listowel ON*
Jake & Anne, *Warman SK*
Neil & Alfred, *Cornwall ON*
Henry & Val, *Red Deer AB*
Peter & Jeanette, *Warman SK*
Bob & Debbie, *New Hamburg ON*
Ron, *Red Deer AB*
Paul & Myra, *Saskatoon SK*
Connie, *New Hamburg ON*
32 grandchildren, many great-grandchildren,
1 great-great-grandchild
Predeceased by daughter Greta McMullen

Correspondence: Elmer & Linda Meinema 424 Elma E, Listowel ON N4W 2E5

Job Opportunities

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Lethbridge, Alberta

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Mr. Corny VanDasselaar
Chairman, Principal Search Committee
***RR-8-41-3*, Lethbridge AB T1J 4P4**
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Principal

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A detailed job description & application is available at www.crcna.org *"What We Offer"* or www.crcna.org *"Get Involved"*.

Application deadline is **November 17, 2006**.

In keeping with our Equal Opportunity Policy, qualified persons who are members of minority and aboriginal groups are encouraged to apply.

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Harold Fledderus, Board Vice-Chair
Belleville Christian School
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Belleville, ON, K8N 4Z5
Phone: 613-962-7849 Fax: 613-962-6440
Email: bellevillechristianschool@yahoo.com

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Please call, fax, e-mail or write Clarence Meints (board chair) or Jack VandenBorn (principal).

Phone: 250-845-7736 Fax: 250-845-7738
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Qualifications:

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- Business experience in a school environment is a definite asset.

A detailed job description and full qualifications are available upon request. Salary and benefits will be commensurate with appropriate training and relevant experience, and is based on the administrative salary grid. Suitably qualified, Christian applicants are invited to apply by October 31, 2006. Ideally, the successful applicant would commence duties as soon as possible, but certainly no later than January 2007.

Please forward your letter of application, resume, references, and pastor's reference and/or Christian statement of faith to:

Frank Low, Chair,
Director of Operations Search Committee
654 Agnes Street
Victoria, BC, V8Z 2E7

Any direct enquires can be made to Frank at (250) 356-4631 (bus.) or email: frank.low@rbc.com or frank-lin@shaw.ca.

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ANNUAL DUTCH CHRISTMAS HYMN SING

Presented by
Zingend Geloven Foundation
The Dutch Christian Radio Broadcast

ON FRIDAY,
NOVEMBER, 17, 2006,
7.30 p.m.

at "Heritage Hall"
Holland Christian Homes
7900 McLaughlin Road South,
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With participation of The Liberation Choir under the
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Oct 19, 20 First annual Christian Stewardship Services planned giving conference and membership meeting. For details see website: **www.csservices.ca**

Oct 21 Day of Encouragement – Celebrating our God while becoming equipped for ministry It is an oppportunity for all deacons, elders and all other church members to be encouraged, inspired and trained for service. It happens at Hamilton District Christian High School in **Ancaster**. Theme: Come to the Water. Choose from 49 workshops and 15 Service Sites. Cost $50. Contact your deacons for a registration form or contact Diaconal Ministries at (905) 336-2920. Details at www.diaconalministries.com.

Oct 27-29 Hamilton District Christian High School 50th anniversary weekend. For information about activities or to register as alumni: www.hdch.org or 905.648.6655

Nov 8 The 2006 Annual *Church and Charity Law* Seminar Hosted by: Carters Professional Corp. 8:45 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. at Young-Nak Korean Presbyterian Church, 650 McNicoll Avenue, **Toronto**, Ontario. Cost: Early Registration fee is $15.00 per person (includes GST). $20.00 after Nov 1.

Nov 8 Redeemer's annual Bernard Zylstra lecture series, **Ancaster**. Featured speaker - Dr. Jonathan Chaplin. Theme: Speaking from Faith in Public Life. Public events/lectures throughout the day. See ad this issue.

Nov 10 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus, **Bowmanville** Rehoboth CRC. 8:00 p.m. Contact: L. Hellinga at 905-623-6943. .

Nov 11 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus, **Trenton** CRC 7:30 pm. Contact: S. Bach 613-965-6618.

Nov 12 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus, **Newmarket** CRC 6:00 pm. For further information contact Harold de Haan 905-389-2104 or Rev. Arie VanEek 905-689-5266.

Nov 15 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus, **Hamilton** First CRC 8:00 p.m. Contact: A. VanEek 905-689-5266..

Nov 17 Zingend Geloven Foundation presents the Annual Dutch Christmas Hymn Sing, 7.30 p.m. at the "Heritage Hall" of Holland Christian Homes, **Brampton**, Ont. With participation of The Liberation Choir, Willem Van Suijdam, Director; Lenny Dykstra, Song Leader; Rev. Peter Van Egmond, meditation.

Nov 17 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus **Chatham** First Presbyterian Church, Fifth St, 7:30 p.m. Contact: H. Hystek 519-351-0684

Nov 18 The Lighthouse Annual Fundraising Dinner and Silent Auction at Villa Colombo in **Toronto.** Reservations required 416-535-6262

Nov 19 Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus with duet: Michael & Laura Pin. **Drayton** Reformed Church, 7:30 p.m. Contact: E. Walter 519-638-2953.

THE BERNARD ZYLSTRA LECTURES

At Redeemer University College

Dr. Jonathan Chaplin

Director of the Kirby Laing Institute for Christian Ethics at Tyndale House, Cambridge, England
Senior Fellow, Work Research Foundation

Speaking from Faith in Public Life

NOVEMBER 8, 2006

Chapel: *Reasoning Passionately in the Public Square* 11:00 am - Auditorium
Work Research Foundation Fellowship Inaugural: 4.00 pm - Room 214
Public Lecture: *Why Bother with Democracy - if We Know the Truth Already?* 7:00 pm - Room 213

For more information, please contact 905-648-2139 x4414 or mraddatz@redeemer.ca

Supported by a grant from: John Templeton Foundation

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You are invited to:

HERITAGE DAY

(formerly Senior Citizen's Day)

Redeemer University College — Monday, October 30

Registration begins at 9:30 with activities planned from 10:00 to 3:00

MORNING SESSION:

"Politics, the Bible and the Reformation Confessions"
by Dr. David T. Koyzis

"While there is much of life that is not touched on in the Bible or the Reformed confessions of the 16th and 17th centuries, all of these treat political authority. The French, Belgic, Hevetic and Westminster Confessions, among others, view the task of government as a confessional matter, and not one of indifference". Why is this? David T. Koyzis will explore this question and offer possible answers.

AFTERNOON SESSION:

Musical Program

Guests will have an opportunity to meet with their grandchildren during the afternoon coffee break.

Registration fee is $15, including lunch. For more information and to register in advance, please call Magda Beukes at 905-648-2139 ext. 4208. Last date of registration will be October 23.

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Note:
The Dutch Service originally scheduled for Oct. 29th has been cancelled.

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Will Iran follow North Korea's lead?

Residents emerging from a subway in Pyongyang, North Korea

Scott Peterson

ISTANBUL, TURKEY Days before North Korea reported that it had conducted its first-ever nuclear test, it stated why it would defy the world to join the nuclear club.

"The US extreme threat of a nuclear war and sanctions and pressure compel [North Korea] to conduct a nuclear test," the Foreign Ministry in Pyongyang warned last week.

That reasoning resonates in Tehran – even though comparisons are limited between North Korea and Iran, which is still a signatory to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT).

"More pressure [from the US] against Iran will accelerate the nuclear project of the country," says Saeed Laylaz, a political and security analyst in Tehran who says that American actions will determine Iran's strategic choices.

"Because the regime is convinced that the US wants to [change the regime], they believe they have a temporary opportunity to protect themselves [using] a nuclear program as a shield," says Mr. Laylaz. "If the US can convince [Iran] they are not going to collapse the regime ... then they will be ready to cooperate much better and more constructively than now."

Iran ignored an August 31 UN deadline to suspend uranium enrichment. A sanctions resolution was to be worked out this week, before the North Korea test.

Months of negotiations that included a broad incentives package have stalled over demands that Iran first suspend enrichment. While restating its position Tuesday that all nuclear weapons should be abolished, Iran has been virtually alone in not calling for tough sanctions against North Korea, or condemning the test.

"North Korea's nuclear test was a reaction to America's threats and humiliation," Iran's state-run radio said. "Not only did the United States not lift the sanctions it had imposed ... it even increased the diplomatic pressure. Such pressure finally led North Korea to conduct its nuclear test."

Some defense analysts have warned of a similar dynamic taking root in Iran, especially under the nationalist leadership of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has repeatedly said Iran would not give up nuclear technology.

"Logically speaking, it does make sense for Iran to explore how it can maximize its security benefits from the current nuclear discussion," says Kaveh Afrasiabi, a past adviser to Iran's nuclear negotiating team, contacted in Boston.

"The threshold will come if there is an escalation of the security situation, prompting Iran to set aside its misgivings about nuclear weapons," says Mr. Afrasiabi.

"It all boils down to questions of national security," says Afrasiabi, adding that Iran sees reason to fear the US presence in Afghanistan and Iraq. "It is unrealistic to expect that Iran would not feel any security paranoia as a result of these military build-ups, and there is no sign of it abating."

Comparisons are limited between North Korea – which withdrew from the NPT in 2003, kicked out UN inspectors, and stated its weapons ambitions – and Iran, which says it aspires only to peaceful nuclear power.

Both have been targets of US-led pressure that has grown since President Bush lumped them in his "axis of evil" with Iraq. But countries like China and Russia have balked at imposing sanctions.

A host of Western officials expressed frustration with Iran last week. Top European negotiator Javier Solana warned that his "endless hours" of talks had been fruitless: "This dialogue ... cannot last forever, and it is up to the Iranians now to decide whether its time has come to an end."

Experts point out key differences in the two cases. For years, North Korea has been much further along in its programs, and Western intelligence has long believed that Pyongyang had enough highly enriched uranium for several nuclear devices.

By contrast, Iran froze its fledgling enrichment activities for two and a half years while it negotiated with Britain, France, and Germany. Those talks failed, and last April, Mr. Ahmadinejad announced that Iran had achieved low-level enrichment of a few grams of uranium – a step that could fuel a reactor if done on an industrial scale.

But Iran and North Korea focus on expanding ballistic-missile programs. Iran's Shahab series is based on North Korean designs and expertise. Missile tests in July further isolated Pyongyang; recent tests by Iran have also raised eyebrows.

It is also widely believed that North Korea has passed on nuclear and other scientific know-how; North Korean experts in the construction of reinforced underground bunkers visited Iran late last year.

"Iran has been very careful to match outside pressure with incremental, small steps," says a veteran political analyst in Tehran. But if the West "increases pressure in a tangible way – such as sanctions or an oil embargo – there could be a strategic change, because surrender is out of the question with this present government."

If pressure grows "from many sides, and Iran is completely isolated," says this analyst, "it would give the upper hand to [factions] that seek some kind of extraordinary thing as a deterrent, like a bomb."

Still, Iran understands the risks of following North Korea, though nearby Israel, Pakistan, and India all have nuclear arsenals. They are "well aware there would be a domino effect, and a nuclear arms race in their own region," says Afrasiabi.

"The North Korea crisis has been manna from heaven for Iran," says Afrasiabi. "It puts Iran on the back burner, and the Iranians can legitimately say: 'We have renounced weapons; we have cooperated with the IAEA; we are negotiating. So why impose sanctions on us, while North Korea can get away scot-free?'"

And there may be another message received in Tehran: "If you want to be alive, you have to be strong," says analyst Laylaz. "This is the main, first, and last lesson [for Iran] from North Korea."

Scott Peterson is a staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

News Digest

First tobacco companies, now automakers

California is suing the major automakers in the U.S. for damaging the environment and for contributing to global warming. "Vehicle emissions are the single most rapidly growing source of the carbon emissions contributing to global warming, yet the federal government and automakers have refused to act. It is time to hold these companies responsible for their contribution to this crisis," said California's Attorney-General.

Well said: everybody ought to be held responsible. What about the mayhem caused by drunk driving? Maybe California ought to be suing all the producers of alcoholic beverages. People need to drive to work, but they don't need to drink alcohol. And what about the problems of overweight and inactivity caused by television and computers? Shouldn't we sue the manufacturers of televisions and computers?

I'm not sure California would like that. Suing the already struggling automakers may sound fine in California, but perhaps not in Michigan. Maybe Michigan should retaliate by suing the California computer industry.

Maybe we Canadians have a right to sue California for the damage Hollywood has done to Canadian culture, and what about the damage done to the moral fibre of the country by trashy Hollywood movies?

Next fast foods

There are other ways of harassing the corporations when you can't get the masses to make responsible choices. Since far too many are opting for french fries and hamburgers, some would make it hard for fast-food chains to locate. Several cities and town in the U.S. have already created such zoning restrictions and New York City is contemplating similar action. Some arguments in favor: 1) Fast-food joints make us fat. 2) They cause traffic problems. 3) They pollute. 4) They're ugly. 5) They cause truancy. 6) They hurt local restaurants. 7) We banned smoking in restaurants; why not ban high calorie burgers, too?

Right on. But why not zone out all restaurants: 1) they discourage home-cooked foods. 2) They cause people to spend too much on food. 3) They don't provide high-paying jobs. 4) I can't afford to eat out except at Wendy's anyhow.

Our local university attracts a lot of unruly students who want to live nearby. They make lots of noise, party late and don't do yard work. Quite a few people wouldn't mind zoning out the university. And churches create a lot of traffic Sunday mornings. Some have tried to zone out churches as well.

Since cars cause pollution, I have advice for California: zone out all car dealerships.

Bambi's revenge

It's harder to zone out deer. According to one report, the ecoli in spinach that made dozens of people sick may have been caused by deer. It's a species war. Bambi is polluting our salad bars.

I've noticed that the squirrels are becoming more hostile of late too. When I go out hiking, I get the distinct impression that they're pelting me with walnuts. And walnuts are very big this year. Some are nearly the size of coconuts.

Sometimes it's like a battlefield out there, with missiles popping and thumping all around you. You holler, "Incoming!" and you hit the deck – but that only makes you a bigger target for the squirrel-insurgency.

It's a sign of the end-times: nature is striking back.

My cat has been giving me dirty looks too. And he keeps depositing fleas in my favorite easy chair.